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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["CAN YOU RENOUNCE ALL YOUTHFUL PLEASURES TO BE WITH ME, SADIE?" HER UNCLE SAID, MOURNFULLY.]

LORD OF HER LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

It is recreation hour in Park House, Wentworth, Miss Lotway's select academy for the limited number of sixteen young ladies, and confusion prevails in the schoolroom, for though the aforesaid damsels boast everyone a superabundant supply of blue blood in their veins their lungs are not decreased in power, as may easily be gathered from the noise so few can make.

Books are tossed on one side, pens and ink discarded, gossip and holiday anticipations are in full swing.

The evening is close. June is fast drawing to its end, and the windows are thrown wide open to let what air will into the room.

Crouched up in what seems a most uncomfortable attitude on the back board sits one girl alone. A book is beside her, but the dusk is growing thicker each moment, and, if it were not, Saditha Lancaster, or Sadie, as

she is always called, would devote little attention to reading.

She is thinking evidently of some pleasant, yet deep subject. Her chin rests on one hand poised on her knee, and even in the gloom a smile can be traced lingering on her lips.

The voices from the window do not disturb her. In fact, she does not hear them; she is used to the babble, for one thing, and her reflections are too engrossing for another.

Suddenly the door is opened, and a stream of light brought in. The girls draw back instinctively from the window. Miss Lotway would not approve of the various perch-like attitudes on the sill if she were aware of them, and Sadie Lancaster wakes up with a start.

It is only the servant, but when she has lit the gas she approaches the slight figure on the back board.

"Miss Lotway wishes to speak with you, Miss Lancaster."

Sadie shuts her book, and rises to her full graceful height. Her face seems to have grown strangely pale.

"Where is she, Bruce?" she asks, hurriedly.

The rest of the girls look a little sympathetic and curious. "Old Lotway" rarely sends for any of them at this hour—is Sadie going to get a wiggling?

"In the small sitting-room, miss."

Sadie takes a rapid glance at her reflection, tries to smooth back one or two refractory locks that curl determinately on her brow, and, after exchanging a few remarks with her school-companions, goes from the room.

Her heart is beating in a nervous, uncomfortable fashion that makes her red lips quiver slightly, and as she mounts the stairs her limbs tremble.

"Can she have found out about yesterday?" she thinks. "Oh, dear! how frightened I feel. My head reeds. Did I do wrong? it won't leave my mind that I have; and yet—yet," the girl draws a short, quick breath, almost like a sigh, "it could not be wrong to have saved a life."

The door of the sitting-room is reached, and with a sharp twitch to pull herself together, Sadie knocks, and then turns the handle.

Miss Lotway looks up affectionately at the girl—she is proud of Sadie; proud, not only of her talents, which are undeniable, but of her beauty.

Since first the little orphan came to her charge Miss Lotway's heart has gone out to her; and though many a time duty has called upon her to reprimand the girl, yet the love lives none the less for being concealed.

Sadie's dark gray eyes see in an instant that perturbation is marked on the governess's quiet face, and her heart sinks with the foreboding that seized her just now.

Miss Lotway is seated at her table writing, and a number of letters are lying beside her pen.

"Ah! Sadie, come in, my dear!" she says. Sadie's heart loses its quick beat; she stands by the table waiting for the governess to speak. Miss Lotway puts on her gold spectacles a little nervously, and continues: "Sit down, my dear. I have sent for you, Sadie, to inform you of an occurrence that has surprised me greatly!"

Sadie's lustrous eyes are fixed on the older woman; it seems as if there were a look of fear in them.

"Yes, Miss Lotway," she answers.

The governess stretches out her hand, and takes up a foreign letter.

"I think, perhaps, it will be better for you to read this yourself," she says.

The girl rises and receives the letter; it is written very badly—evidently the hand of an illiterate person.

"Hotel Continental, Paris.

"June 29th, 18—

"DEAR MADAME.—I am requested by Sir Reginald Derwent to write you that he desires his niece, Miss Saditha Lancaster, to—

"Niece!" interpolates Sadie, as a flush of surprise rises to her cheeks. Miss Lotway says nothing, and motions the girl to go on reading—

"to leave your care and travel to London to join him there on the first of July. Sir Reginald desires also that you will acquaint him with all and any extra expense there may be, and a cheque shall be forwarded to you as usual from Messrs. Brown and Wright, solicitors to Sir Reginald. Sir Reginald would have communicated to you himself, but is too great an invalid. He begs that Miss Lancaster will be at the Langham Hotel not later than six o'clock on the date named, and that you will furnish her with funds for journey, &c.—I am, dear madam, your obedient servant,

"JOHN HOLROYD,

"Valet to Sir Reginald Derwent.

"Miss Lotway."

Sadie's hand drops the letter. She has deciphered each word with difficulty, the writing is so bad, though the spelling is correct.

"My uncle, Miss Lotway!" she says in low tones. "What does it mean? I never knew I had one! Did you?"

Sadie shakes her head.

"No, my dear, it is as great a surprise to me as to you. I always thought your only guardians were Messrs. Brown and Wright, and should have felt tempted to consider this letter a hoax, had I not received one from those gentlemen also corroborating the statement, and forwarding me a cheque for your travelling expenses, &c."

"It seems incredible!"

The girl drops into a chair again, all thought of the scholastic discipline which dictated that no young lady shall sit in the presence of the superior without permission is forgotten.

"Did Mr. Brown or Mr. Wright ever mention my uncle's name?" she asks, after a pause.

"Never! You know as much, my child, about yourself and your belongings as I do. I have informed you often of the method of our first introduction. How you were brought to me just ten years ago last month, then a

child of eight—placed with me for vacations, and all and most promptly and well paid for. This is indeed a surprise to me, Sadie, and, I say it truthfully, my dear, not a pleasant one, for you have grown into my heart, and though, of course, I anticipated some day you would leave me, I did not reckon on its being so summary and unsatisfactory as this."

Miss Lotway busies herself with her papers, and Sadie sits on gazing out into the summer's dusk with the letter in her hand.

"I suppose I must go," she says, breaking the silence.

"There is no doubt on that point."

"But I shall come back to you as quickly as possible. I don't want to go. I don't know this uncle. I can't love him as I do you; why he kept silent all these years, and only came forward to claim me now? I am your charge, Miss Lotway, not his!"

The girl's face grows very white, and her hands tremble.

"My dear," the governess replies, "you must not question Sir Reginald Derwent's motives; doubtless they are good ones. I know, Sadie, you are happy here, but this journey after all does not mean separation for ever; you can always look on my house as your home, Sadie, and on me as on a mother."

Sadie goes to Miss Lotway's side, and kneels beside her, and taking the worn right hand of the older woman kisses it silently and warmly. A flood of burning thought is in her breast.

"Shall I tell her all? Oh! what a relief it would be. I seem such a hypocrite, but my promise my promise I cannot break it!"

Miss Lotway draws away her hand and crosses the dark curtains gently.

"If you are anxious to return, dear, perhaps Sir Reginald will permit it for a time."

"He must let me come," the girl says, almost passionately. "I cannot leave here altogether."

Miss Lotway's worn face flushes with pleasure—she is forced to wear a mask, and steal her gentle heart so frequently—this young, impetuous love is something new and delightful to her. Little does she guess that another and a stronger motive than affection for herself (which does indeed exist in Sadie for her governess) is at work in the girl's mind.

"Well, we will not talk of it," she observes, with a return of her accustomed manner; "you must prepare to start for London to-morrow. I have informed Mrs. Chaplin of your departure, and she is already packing your clothes."

Sadie rises from her knees, she stands with her face turned from Miss Lotway, as she walks in a dull sort of way.

"What time must I go to-morrow?"

"I have looked out your trains. I shall send one of the maids with you to Upper Wentworth Junction. She will put you safely in the London train. I wish I could spare her to go all the way, or better still, accompany you myself but you know that is impossible with the examinations beginning this week, and the vacation drawing so near; still you are no child, Sadie, but a sensible girl, and I know I can trust you as I did when I let you go alone to Grantham town yesterday to join Mrs. Lewis with our contributions to the bazaar."

"Trust me," whispers the girl, to herself, her lips growing pale. "Oh! how wretched I seem in my own sight!"

"And," continues the governess, rising, "I shall telegraph to Messrs. Brown and Wright for someone to meet you at the other end."

Sadie still stands motionless, and Miss Lotway, coming up to her, draws her for an instant into her arms.

"My dear child," she murmurs, tenderly, "if we must part, you must be brave; remember, whatever happens in the future I am your staunch friend—governess no longer, but friend—and if you want me hold out your hands to me and I will help you while I live."

Sadie's lips tremble, she rests her head on

the kind breast, and says nothing, only a small feeling of comfort steals into her mind.

"And now," Miss Lotway says, "go to your room; you start early, and will have a long, exciting day before you; you need not come into prayer, I will have some supper sent to you. Kiss me Sadie. Heaven bless you, dear! Good-night!"

"Good-night," whispers the girl.

She goes from the room in the same dazed sort of way and up the stairs mechanically; on the landing she pauses.

"Would she have spoken like that if she had known the truth?" is the thought in her mind.

CHAPTER II.

The news that Sadie Lancaster is going away is received with great incredulity by the inmates of the schoolroom. Sadie, who has never left Park House except once, on a short visit to her chief friend, May Hope, in a past vacation, to be called away before the examinations, it is impossible! So sum up the girls.

It comes out somehow about Sir Reginald, and this only adds to the mystery and romance; for the moment nothing is thought of but Sadie and what she is going to do.

As to the person of the hour herself, she seems more dazed and strange than last night; she is pale, thin, and there is a troubled look on her young face.

Miss Lotway's heart yearns towards the girl; she thinks she can guess at some of the complex feelings that crowd Sadie's breast, yet she is very far from divining the truth.

June sunshine glints the gardens and the old grey stone-house that has been Sadie's home since she can remember distinctly, a pang goes through her as she descends the well-worn stair-carpet, and goes out on to the landing window on to the faintly moving trees in the pleasure-ground, which has been her favourite haunt for so many summers gone by. The old familiar sound of the pianos going in several rooms strikes her ear with a sigh of regret, and the hum of voices coming from the school-room mingles with it.

Her boxes are packed, the simple wardrobe gathered together, and she is ready to start.

She looks at the little sitting-room door, and enters at Miss Lotway's bidding.

"Come in, my dear," says the schoolmistress, "and sit down. Maria will be here directly. Put this money in your purse, Sadie, and remember, dear, to do all I tell you. Ask the guard to select an empty carriage; don't sit facing the engine, though the day is hot the draught is always dangerous, and—Oh! here is Maria!"

Maria appears shy and uncomfortable. She is one of the housemaids, and she bears a note, which she hands to Miss Lotway.

The latter tears it open.

"Wait for Miss Lancaster in the hall, Maria, and see that the trunks are put on the fly."

Maria disappears obediently, and Miss Lotway reads the note.

"Dear me! Well, I really am not sorry," she observes. Then, as she turns her attention to Sadie, once more she adds. "Dr. Bray writes to say that Mr. Ronalds will not be able to take the classics at the examination. Some domestic reason—he will send Mr. Matthews instead. You will be sorry, dear child, to miss his lectures?"

"Yes," falters Sadie, her colour coming and going, "he is very clever."

"So is Mr. Ronalds, I believe," Miss Lotway says, taking up her pen to finish a note she intends sending to Sir Reginald Derwent by his niece, "but somehow I never cared for him. He is too young—much too young and altogether unsuitable!"

By "unsuitable" any shrewd person may read Miss Lotway means John Ronalds's great personal attractions are not desirable in the precincts of Park House school.

Sadie fidgets her right hand glove. Her eyes are downcast, and the broad brim of her sailor hat hides the expression on her face.

"There, my dear," Miss Lotway rises. "Please deliver that letter to Sir Reginald, and mind, Sadie, write me a line to say how you bore the journey, and now you must go. Cheer up, my child, this is not parting for ever. Your home will welcome you whenever you come, and, who knows, your return may be speedy."

Sadie lifts her fresh young lips to the governess. There is a suspicious mist before her eyes.

She has been so long dependent on this kind, quiet woman, that now, when she realises that life stretches before her, hidden by the veil of mystery, where she may perhaps meet sorrow, she seems to cling to Miss Lotway. She is on the brink of the stream that wafts her from girlhood to womanhood, and for the instant she hesitates.

But hesitation or no she must ford the stream.

Miss Lotway draws the slender hand through her arm, and leads Sadie to the broad hall door.

"I do not think you had better disturb the class, my dear," she says, with a return to the old manner. "Mr. Matthews will be here directly. I will convey any message to your companions."

"Please give May my love—but I shall see her—you all again—soon."

"Of course, my dear, of course! Remember and write, Sadie."

Sadie murmurs assent, steps into the fly beside Maria's ruddy face and plump form, and is drawn slowly down the avenue away from the old grey house through the sunlit trees on to the high road.

There are no tears in Sadie's eyes, but she has grown even paler, and her heart is throbbing fast.

"He has got my note—will he come? I feel I must see him, and yet—yet I seem filled with shame at my own boldness. Oh! how despicable I should have looked in Miss Lotway's eyes if she had known my deceit—have I done wrong? He swore he would kill himself if I refused. Oh, Jack—Jack! I almost wish I had never seen you!"

The unspoken wail of her thoughts forces a smothered exclamation to break from her lips, but as Maria makes some observation Sadie rouses herself to speak kindly to the maid, who thinks Miss Sadie "is taking on at leaving."

The drive is a long one to Upper Wentworth. The route is familiar to the girl's wonderful grey eyes, which have an expression of eagerness and pain in them.

At last the town is reached; the fly rumbles through the streets and draws up at the station.

As Sadie alights she throws a hasty glance around, and says to Maria,

"When my boxes are taken down you had better go back in the fly."

"Oh, if you please, miss, Miss Lotway told me as how I were to see you into the train quite safe, and get your ticket," is Maria's reply.

Sadie's lips compress a little, but she stands very quietly while Maria and a porter dispose of her luggage, and then troop off to the booking office.

Every now and then her eyes go round in the same hurried, nervous fashion, and she scarcely takes in Maria's long-winded intelligence as to the whereabouts of her belongings.

The platform stretches before them in a straight line, dotted here and there by groups of passengers.

Maria escorts her charge to a first-class carriage, and with a heart grown suddenly cold Sadie gets in and sinks into a corner. Maria stands religiously by the door till the final whistle is given, and the train slowly moves away.

Sadie exerts herself to smile a parting to the maid, and then settles back with a face

that looks blank with disappointment and pain, yet with a strange, faint, contradictory air of relief in her eyes. Her thoughts work fast; they dwell, as they have dwelt for so many months past now, on one subject. She takes no heed of the fact that the train has speeded from Upper Wentworth into the tiny little station of Granthamtown, and is stopping.

Suddenly she is recalled to herself. The door of her carriage is opened hurriedly, someone enters, slams it to again, and the next instant her hand is grasped in a strong one, and a colour delicate as a rose-leaf is stealing into her cheeks.

"Jack!" she murmurs, in startled tones, "how you surprised me!"

"Did I, my darling? Why? Did you think I had dropped from the clouds? I know you credit me with all sorts of powers; but supernatural travelling is not among them."

They are moving away from the station-houses and flower-beds now.

Sadie's hand resting in his trembles.

"I thought you had not come when I did not see you at Wentworth," she replies hurriedly. Jack Ronalds, secure in the solitude of the carriage, with only fleeting posts and hedges to see him, bends his head, and touches the sweet lips near with his own.

"You are a poor conspirator, my own," he says, lightly. "To be seen at Wentworth was to be most probably done out of our meeting. The wisest course was the one I pursued. Could you really think so badly of me, Sadie? Don't you know that whatever happened I should see you this morning?"

"But," falters Sadie, "you are not going to London, Jack?"

"Stranger things have occurred. Don't look so frightened, baby. I almost believe, Sadie, you wish I had not come!"

There is a decided ring of pain in the last words spoken slowly.

Sadie hesitates, takes a long breath, and then answers,

"Jack, I am not a good conspirator. I—I don't mind me dear, I hate this deception, it goes against my nature—and yet—yet!"

"Yet!" Jack whispers, his dark eyes seeking hers, his handsome face eloquent with tenderness, "and yet your love for me overpowers your objections. My darling, my sweet one, do I not know it? Do you think me blind to all you have done, Sadie? I have asked you to act against your principles. Clandestine meetings vex your pure nature; yet for love of me you bear this all! Sadie, I am not worthy of it, dear!"

Sadie listens to the low impassioned words, and her heart thrills. This delicate comprehension of all she has suffered strikes home. She lifts her face to John Ronalds.

"Yes, my love is stronger, as it will be, Jack, to the end, pray God!"

He bends and kisses her once more, and then, clasping her hand, says gently,

"Now to hear all your wonderful intelligence. Our time is brief, for I must leave you at Norton, and get back as quickly as possible to my duties, and those d—" he checks himself, "those young cubs. By Heaven! beating classics into their brains is almost as bad as stone picking!"

"My poor Jack!" how tender Sadie's voice is.

He carries her hand to his lips.

"Now for all your news. Your note was so scanty. How did you manage to post it?"

Sadie blushes, and then grows pale again; discussed in broad daylight her deception seems more terrible.

"I slipped out after we were all in bed, and ran down the avenue to the box at the gate. Oh, Jack, dear! I don't ever reproach me for what I have done!"

She hides her face, and Jack Ronalds draws her to his arms. There is a fleeting look of irritation round his mouth and annoyance in his dark blue eyes, but it vanishes as he says,—

"Reproach you, my own. Sadie, you have yet to know me; but come, dearest, the mo-

ments are flying, and we have our plans to make. What a romance it must seem to you, little one; a real live uncle turning up. Who knows, perhaps you will turn out to be an heiress, and then—. Will you ever grow cold to me, Sadie?"

Sadie's answer is to nestle to him for an instant. Then she replies,

"I feel I shall dislike this uncle. Why have I been neglected, left to strangers all these years? my heart does not go out to him. After all I owe him no duty. Miss Lotway has been my only friend and relative till—"

"I came six short months ago. Do you remember, Sadie, my first classical lecture when you hated me?"

Sadie shakes her head lightly.

"I never hated you, but I thought you were conceited, and all the girls made such a fuss about you."

Jack Ronalds laughs, but, nevertheless, his vanity is pleased.

"And after then our intimacy grew. It is pleasant to look back on, Sadie. It is happiness to be loved, my darling."

"Yes," murmurs the girl, still her delicate nature shrinks when she recalls for an instant what demands that love has made upon her, the paltry excuses and prevarications so frequent on her lips that till now were never sullied by a lie. She sighs faintly, and Jack sees it.

"And the future," he continues, "will be happier even than the past, let us trust; but now to business; write me a long full explicit account of your meeting with your uncle. Humour him; he is, he may be, and, I should imagine, full of crochets, and doubtless will be trying, but you can bear with that, for—"

Sadie breaks in impatiently.

"Why should I bear with him, Jack? I go to him now because I am anxious to discover something about my parentage; but I mean to tell him decidedly I shall return to Miss Lotway. I cannot live away from Wentworth, and—and you!"

Jack Ronalds looks out of the window, and so hides the frown on his face, but his hand presses her tenderly.

"Wentworth will not hold me for ever, darling, as I told you yesterday when we met in the Free Library at Granthamtown; but go back to your uncle—it is your duty, Sadie, dear, to think of him, to consider him. Remember, he is your mother's brother, or—"

"My mother's brother," Sadie repeats, in low tones.

Ronalds goes on quickly, before she can express surprise,—

"Or, I was about to add, my darling, or your father's; an uncle is a near relative; besides, yours is not the same name—he must be on your mother's side."

"If he were my mother's brother," the girl says slowly, "I feel, Jack, I should love him!"

The man's face grows clearer.

"Of course you would, dear. Then there is another thing; evidently your uncle's servant is a very important person. You must be friendly with Holroyd."

"Holroyd?"

There is genuine surprise in Sadie's eyes now.

"Yes, the servant, Holroyd; you wrote his name in the note last night; did you think I was a thought reader? I have the note with me; here it is. No, that is a letter from my sister. No, I must have looked it away with all your other dear little scraps."

Sadie smiles faintly.

"I forgot I had mentioned the name, but I was so agitated last night I might have written anything."

There is a moment's pause, during which Mr. Ronalds occupies himself with carrying her small hand to his lips, and kissing it gently.

Sadie breaks the silence.

"Jack," she whispers softly, "will this make any difference to us, dear? Must we still keep our secret?"

His head is bent over her hand as he answers.

"For a little while longer, my darling; don't you see it would be impossible to say anything to your uncle? I don't want to look too bad in his eyes. In a short time the news about my appointment will come, and it must be good, my credentials were so splendid; and then, Sadie, I can go to your uncle or to Miss Lotway, if she be still appointed your guardian, and, with a really decent income of my own, I shall be able to gloss over any anger our deception may cause. It is painful for you, darling, but you understand my reasons, and will give me credit for wishing to appear honourable in my intentions."

Sadie's long lashes lie dark and silky on her air cheeks; she is quiet.

Does a thought rush into her mind that honour has been carefully neglected by her lover in all their previous dealings? Does a vision of the day when conscience and modesty gave her strength to try and tear herself from her love, and relinquish the clandestine meetings come to her, bringing with it how she had been forced from those convictions, worked upon by threats of shame and death coming to her lover? Is this the current of her thought that keeps her silent?

Perhaps Jack Ronalds guessed it, for he suddenly becomes tender and imploring.

"Trust me a little while longer, Sadie. I feel I am a brute to ask you to do so much, but I cannot help myself. I love you, my own, my darling! I cannot live without you!"

And Sadie is a girl—a young, sweet, true-hearted girl. She dismisses the dark thought from her mind.

She lifts her lovely face to the man's handsome one. The colour comes and goes in the cheeks; the glorious grey eyes shine like stars as she says,—

"I do trust you Jack, and you know it."

Then their conversation wanders for a time into the happy path made up of lovers' small themes that seem so great to them. And then the country through which they are flying begins to be dotted with houses. Away in the distance the smoke of a town is descried. It is the signal for their separation.

"And you have to go all that way back alone," sighs Sadie.

"While you have to go all the way to London. Dear, dirty, delightful London!"

There is an undoubted enthusiasm in Jack Ronalds' tone.

"Oh! I passed through London last summer when I went to stay with the Hopes," says Sadie. "I thought it horrid; but then I like fresh air."

"Little country mouse! Wait till you have been in Bond-street and seen the shops; you won't care to go further than Primrose-hill for your fresh air I'll bet anything. By Jove! how I wish I were going on with you. Now it sounds like the tombs to return to that wretched hole, Wentworth!"

The houses grow thicker, and the train begins to slacken.

Sadie's lips tremble. Jack is the last of all the objects she knows so well. She feels a nervous pang at parting from him, and facing the strange world alone.

Jack soothes her gently. He is more tender than ever, and succeeds; so that Sadie can smile as the train glides into Norton Station.

"I have left my heart in my lady's keeping," he says, as he takes both Sadie's hands. "It is yours, dear, and you must guard it well. Remember all I have told you—write to me to-night! to-night! Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" repeats the girl.

Their lips meet then as a mist of unshed tears clouds her vision. The door is opened, Jack alights, and the next instant Sadie is moving on alone.

While she sits with the tears trickling down her cheeks and her young heart full to the brim with a surging mass of thoughts that at one moment bring a glow of happiness, the next a pang of self-reproach and self-contempt, the man who is the cause of all this

saunters moodily along the platform of Norton Station, turns out of the entrance, refuses the entreaties of the fly-drivers, stands for an instant, and then walks briskly into the town.

His handsome face is looking bored and cross; and, as he progresses, he gives his well-built shoulders an occasional shrug, it seems almost with petulant annoyance.

"It is a deuced good job the end is near," he ruminates to himself, "for I am getting a bit tired of it. Sadie is young and pretty, and all that, but the life is appalling; and who knows if her stupidity won't upset all my plans at the end. How I longed to be exploit with her, and tell her of the stake which is at risk. But it would never do. Those two slips of my tongue nearly roused her suspicions. Her great grey eyes have a way of looking a fellow through and through."

He walks on through the busy streets thronged with factory people, all enjoying the dinner hour, till he comes to a small public-house. As he approaches it his face grows lighter.

"Come, John Ronalds, don't be a fool! You can't get the moon by crying for it; and you ought to think yourself lucky you have succeeded so well. Gad, it was not such an unpleasant task making love to Sadie Lancaster at first, though it has palled a bit lately.

He stops at a side door, and knocks with his stick.

It is pleasant in the shade here. Walking from the station in the full midday height of a June sun is a little exhausting.

Jack Ronalds standing before the closed door waiting for admission looks, in his well-cut light tweed suit and his hat to match, the last likely person to be known as a tutor at a boy's college.

There is an air of Hyde Park and Bond Street about him which always enthrals Miss Lotway's young ladies, but which has a very different effect upon Miss Lotway herself.

It was a long time before she recovered the shock of Mr. Ronalds' first visit. When she thinks of it now she winces, and marvels how Dr. Bray could have sent so young a tutor. But Mr. Ronalds' classical qualifications are excellent, and that is why until to-day he has visited Park House Academy regularly.

The door of the public-house is opened by a young girl with a pair of roguish-brown eyes. Evidently Mr. Ronalds is known, for she smiles a welcome, and without a moment's hesitation Jack Ronalds rewards her geniality by a kiss.

Ah, Sadie! little do you guess at such a thing sitting in the railway carriage, with the summer breeze blowing back the curls from your lovely brow, and lost in a happy dreamland in which a pair of dark-blue eyes stand out so prominently.

"Mr. Brewer here, Nancy?" queries Ronalds.

Nancy shuts the door and jerks her head in the direction of another one.

"He be there," she observes, "and he baint i' the best of tempers."

Jack Ronalds laughs, bends his handsome head, and kisses her pouting lips again.

"Baint he," he mimics; "well, perhaps he has been out in the sun. Phew! it's enough to roast one to-day. Don't go out, Nancy, or you'll ruin your complexion."

Nancy rubs her cheek.

"I baint afraid," she replies; and then, in answer to a distant voice, her trim figure disappears.

Ronalds advances to the inner door and pushes it open.

A cloud of tobacco smoke greets him, and through it can be seen the form of a man seated in a low chair at an open French window that looks on to the tea gardens and skittle alleys belonging to the inn.

"Well," says Jack, as he flings his hat on the table, and throws himself into another chair, "here I am!"

The other man tosses off some cigar ash.

"Time, too. I think if you make me take

the trouble to come to this outlandish place for your convenience you might at least be in time."

"Couldn't help it. I came as fast as the train would bring me, Phil."

"Well," observes Philip Brewer, after a moment's pause, "what do you want?"

Jack laughs shortly.

"I wired you to meet me here because I thought it might interest you to know the game has begun."

Phil throws away his half-finished cigar.

"You mean that he has come to England?"

Jack nods his head.

"And you are not on the spot to watch him? Upon my word, Jack, you are——"

Jack stretches his arms a little languidly.

"Don't rave, Phil, for Heaven's sake, and don't pay me the bad compliment of calling me a fool. Though I am sitting here I have despatched a trusty confederate, one who, although ignorant of everything, will work all I want."

"And who is this person, pray?" inquires Philip Brewer, with half a sneer.

"A young lady who happens to combine two excellent qualifications for our purpose in herself, being, in fact, Sir Reginald Derwent's niece and——my wife!"

CHAPTER III.

SADIE dreams on, lost to heat, dust, and discomfort, till the steaming of the train into the London terminus wakes her. She puts on her sailor hat and generally tidies herself, and then, as a porter comes to the carriage, gathers her small belongings together and alights.

She feels a little bewildered; there is no sign of either Mr. Wright or Mr. Brown, with whose appearance she is familiar, being always called down to see them when either of the lawyers visit Park House.

The porter waits for orders, and she is turning in the direction of the luggage van, when a voice speaks at her elbow,—

"I am addressing Miss Lancaster?"

Sadie looks round and sees a thin, spare man, dressed in livery, that is to say, in ordinary butler's attire; he has a grave face, with eyes that strike her at once as kind, although tender.

"Yes, I am Miss Lancaster," she replies.

"Sir Reginald has sent the brougham for you, miss; if you will allow me to show you to it first I will see after your luggage."

Sadie lets him take her light wrap and bag, and turns towards a small, neat brougham with a good-looking bay horse.

"You are Holroyd, I suppose?" she says, and a faint remembrance of Jack's advice to make friends with her uncle's valet crosses her mind.

"Yes, miss, John Holroyd. I am Sir Reginald's personal servant."

Sadie gets into the perfectly appointed carriage, it is all so strange, so curious, she seems to herself as if she were dreaming. The busy platform with the porters and passengers, the dark-green hued brougham, the grave form of Holroyd at the door, all seem so many phantoms of her brain.

She does not feel the warmth of the day, or realise the luxurious comfort surrounding her; her grey eyes behold the panorama of moving things, but does not strike her as being actual or existent, till her boxes being put on a four-wheeler, Holroyd mounts beside the coachman, and she is borne swiftly through the streets of London, till she is borne through the London streets thronged with tired, working people, all longing for a breath of sea or country air on this hot June day; then Sadie wakes to know it is not a dream, but that her old life, the well-known peaceful monotony of Park House, is growing fainter in the background, and she is rapidly approaching a new era, of what kind she can not even hazard a guess.

Now for the first time the veil of mystery that has hung over her birth and parentage may be removed. She will be no longer the lonely, relationless girl, from whom her school comrades had parted at every vacation with hearts and words of pity; she, too, may prove to have a home as happy as any of theirs; a home! Sadie starts in her thoughts, her face is dim with colour and then fades to pallor again. Her home in the future is with John Ronalds, her husband.

The girl moves restlessly in the corner of the brougham. Once more the full pang of remorse—is it regret?—at her secret marriage and deceit strikes her heart. She feels a pain there, and a weight as of iron. Many and many a time lately, as she has lain in her bed, listening to the hours chiming from the clock in the tower, has she felt it before. Truly her love has begun early to be her sorrow!

She goes through now in her mind all the struggles she endured before she could bring herself to consent to Jack's proposal. It was no silly romantic, school-girl hesitation; it was the sense of honour that held her back. How well she can see herself wandering slowly by Jack's side in the Spring-decked lanes day after day in last Easter's vacation, listening to his arguments, his pleading; and sadly, but surely, giving way.

Miss Lotway's absence for three short weeks only worked the end. What young heart could withstand the passionate attack Jack Ronalds made? Sadie's could not, and more, her warm, generous, sympathetic nature was touched by allusions to her companionship and help in the future life, which, sketched to her briefly, seemed a vista of honourable work and happiness. She sighs now as she recalls those moments.

It is not because she loves Jack less, but because away from them, viewing them in a calm, clear mood, she sees her weakness and bewails it. Her marriage morning—the day young wives look back upon with a blush of tenderness—brings no such reminiscences to her. All she recalls is the dingy, dirty registry-office, the hurried words, the signing of her name, (she sees nothing beyond her own characters, Saditha Lancaster—her eyes are too blurred to read the name of her husband just above), then the parting, the quick scramble to the train at Wentworth station, and after that, long hours of mingled sorrow, love, apprehension, vague fears, and then the old school-life taken up again, with the burden of her secret killing all her lightheartedness and joy.

And now Sadie is away from the school for aught she knows she has to face a new life, and yet Jack keeps the seal on her lips. Again and again doubt assails her. Has she done wrong? Should she have struggled on to the end? She cannot answer herself. Then the answer had come with alarm and sorrow, for Jack had sworn to destroy himself if she would not become his wife; but, somehow, today this threat grows a feeble, even a cowardly, argument to have used, and the agony she endured seemed to have been spent in vain.

She presses her hands over her eyes as if to shut out this vision, and puts her fingers in her ears to deaden the voice that will whisper, "coward, selfish, unthoughtful, dishonourable!"

"No," she says to herself, as the brougham comes to a standstill before the portico of the Langham Hotel, "I will not—I must not think these things. How wicked I seem to have grown when I must even doubt those who love me. Jack could not help himself then. Has he not told me how he could not even sleep for thinking of me? and then I must not blame him for that; surely to be loved so greatly ought to be a blessing, and yet—yet I do not feel happy."

Holroyd opens the door and helps her to alight.

"I will show you to Sir Reginald's room; but perhaps you would like to rest first and have some tea, Miss?"

"What do you think my uncle would like

me to do?" Sadie asks, shyly, as they enter the hall.

Holroyd hesitates.

"Well, Miss, he told me to take you to him as soon as you arrived; but it's just five o'clock, and Sir Reginald usually has a sleep about now, and—"

"Then I will go to my room first," the girl says, promptly. "Indeed, I shall be glad to have some tea and change my dress."

She does not feel at all nervous with Holroyd, he looks at her so kindly and seems so thoughtful.

There will be no difficulty in becoming friendly with him she settles. Though why Jack should have suggested such a thing is a little strange to her.

Sadie cannot help being friendly with everyone with whom she is brought in contact. She is naturally of so sweet and kind a disposition she wins her way easily.

Holroyd speaks to the porter, and very shortly a trim chambermaid appears, into whose charge she is committed.

Alone in the large bedroom she feels a trifle desolate. The rumble of the traffic down in the street, and the clock striking five in the church tower opposite sound unfamiliar in her ears.

Perhaps she is feeling the effects of her solitary journey, and her thoughts—but she grows suddenly weary and longs for a sleep, in which for a time she may be oblivious to everything.

The entrance of the maid with tea and a plentiful supply of bread-and-butter and cake, followed immediately afterwards by the porter with her boxes, rouses her pleasantly, and she chats with the nice-faced girl, who tells her she has been appointed as a temporary maid to wait on her as long as she is in the hotel, and that her name is Mary. They soon find a subject of mutual interest.

Mary is from the country, and her heart yearns for it once more, so while she unpacks Sadie's trunks, and helps the young lady to change her dress, she drinks in all the description of the trees, flowers and fields—which Sadie knows and loves so well—with avidity.

Refreshed by the tea, and freed from dust, Sadie is chatting on pleasantly to Mary, looking very graceful and lovely in her white batiste gown, when a knock comes at the door, and Holroyd appears.

"Sir Reginald is awake, and will be glad to see you, miss."

Sadie's heart thrills, and she feels nervous; but she rises, and, with a smile to Mary, passes out of the room.

Holroyd closes the door.

"I trust you will not think me rude, Miss Saditha," he says; "but I want to prepare you for seeing your uncle. Sir Reginald is a cripple, and is terribly sensitive; may I make so bold, miss, as to ask you not to let him see if you feel shocked?"

Sadie catches her breath a little, but there is a look of such affectionate entreaty in Holroyd's eyes that her womanly sweetness deadens all trepidation.

"I think it is most kind of you, Holroyd. I am anxious to do everything to please my uncle."

All the fleeting thoughts of anger she indulged in vanish now—a cripple, and sensitive. The appeal is too strong for anger to resist it.

She longs to stop Holroyd and eagerly ask him for more information, but he has turned away; and is it her fancy, or does his voice sound husky as he says:

"Your face does not lie, miss; your heart is just as sweet and lovely!"

Sadie goes down the stairs behind his spare figure, and her eyes close for an instant as he opens the door—she calls up all her courage and enters.

"Miss Saditha is here, sir," says Holroyd, advancing.

Sadie shuts the door gently, and then stands with her gaze resting on the deformed figure

of a man supported by cushions on an invalid couch.

Somehow, even in this first moment, she seems to know he has not always been so misshapen; for the head is a grand one, with a brow on which the white hair waves back, and whose eyes, meeting hers, are the very counterpart of her own. The arm, too, lying across the shawl, looks as if it had been powerful and muscular once, and belonged to a great, strong, tall form.

There is a moment's silence. Sadie sees the heavy eyelids close, the brow contract as with pain; then the arm is stretched out, and a voice sweet and deep says gently,

"Come here, Saditha, my child, and speak to me!"

She moves obediently across the room, and slips her small hand into the larger one, that trembles slightly. Then, involuntarily struck by the tenderness of the face, she stoops and puts her fresh, young lips to the invalid's pale ones.

The clasp on her hand tightens for an instant, a sort of half-sigh, half-broken sob breaks from Sir Reginald's throat; then Sadie, with true delicacy, turns to bring a chair nearer; and when she is seated in it there is no emotion to be seen on her uncle's face.

He settles himself comfortably on his cushions, and says, with an air of lightness, yet with a touch of inexpressible sadness in his voice,—

"So you are a woman now, Saditha. I can scarcely comprehend it. I see you as I saw you last, a thin, frail child, with clustering dark curls and eyes," he stops for an instant. "Eyes, just the same. Grave, sweet, earnest, beautiful; mirrors of your pure soul, my child!"

Sadie flushes faintly; his tones have sunk, he seems to be murmuring to himself. But those last words prick her, for it appears to her that her eyes must be false if they do not reveal the secret of her heart.

Holroyd, waiting in the background, sees the flush on the girl's delicate face, and, with kindly tact, thinking she feels strange, he comes forward.

"It is time for your tonic, Sir Reginald," he says, quietly.

Sir Reginald sighs and then smiles.

"Tonic, Holroyd? Yes, I had forgotten."

Sadie watches the servant pour out the draught, and her uncle drink it with a sense of pained wonderment, dashed by faint amusement. She almost feels inclined to pinch her arm and thus assure herself that it is really she who is sitting in this large room with someone who belongs to her, who speaks softly and looks tenderly. It seems like a dream.

Sir Reginald reads the passing emotions that flit across her face well. He gives the glass back to Holroyd, and after asking him to lift him higher on the cushions, says, very gently,

"Now, old friend, I think I should like to be alone with Miss Saditha for a little while. I have to introduce myself to her, remember."

Holroyd busies himself with the cushions.

"You won't over tire yourself, sir, will you?" he asks, as he turns away.

"I promise you. No," is the answer.

Then the door is shut, and Sadie is alone with her uncle.

"Draw your chair nearer, Saditha, and let me hold your little hand in mine!"

Sadie rises at once, discards the chair, and drawing a footstool close to the couch, sinks upon it, and slips her hand into the outstretched one. Her heart is beating fast. At last the moment has come when she is to know all about herself. Sir Reginald's fingers close over hers, there is a tender smile on her face.

"What do they call you dear, Saditha or Sadie?"

"Sadie," she answers.

"Well, Sadie, my child! Shall you be afraid to leave Miss Lotway, and all your

companions, to come and minister to a poor maimed creature like me?"

Sadie's eyes dim suddenly, for a moment she forgets Miss Lotway, the old school life, her vexation at this unknown uncle's sudden whim to see her. Even Jack and her secret are blotted out by the sympathy and pity she feels. A call is made upon her womanly nature, and it is not made in vain.

"No, uncle Reginald," she answers, "I shall like it."

Sir Reginald draws a quick breath.

"But think again, Sadie; don't decide in a hurry. Can you forego your simple peaceful life for one, perhaps, of incessant travel? Can you bear to leave youth and beauty, to gaze only on a decrepid cripple? Can you renounce all youthful pleasures to be with me, Sadie?"

Sadie answers at once.

"I can!"

Jack is still forgotten. Her whole being is enthralled by the new sensation these questions arouse within her.

Her uncle does not reply at once, he seems deep in thought. After a while he lifts one hand and caresses her dark locks.

"So be it. We will be companions henceforth, Sadie, my child. Though you have never seen me to your remembrance before, though you have been left among strangers, apparently forgotten, yet do you know, Sadie, this is a moment I have often longed for—in my hours of greatest suffering, turned to—and pray Heaven I shall make you happy!"

Sadie bends her head and touches his hand with her lips.

"I am sure you will," she whispers softly, and then unseen by him the colour mounts to her cheeks and fades swiftly. As she bends her chin touches a hard substance within her dress—it is the badge of her allegiance to another, her wedding ring, which she always wears suspended round her neck.

Sir Reginald still caresses her hair, and she keeps her head bent for a few seconds longer to control the expression in her face.

Her thoughts work quickly in those seconds. Jack comes back to her memory, and with him the knowledge that she is not free to give this promise of companionship to her uncle. Then relief comes. Jack cannot take her to their home yet; and he is so sweet and good, he will not object to her remaining with Sir Reginald. Indeed, did he not seem to hint at such a thing?

Her face is calm as she lifts it again, but the struggle in her breast leaves its trace in her eyes, and Sir Reginald sees it.

"You wonder, dear, that I say nothing of your childhood," he says, slowly; "it is troubling you."

"No!" Sadie answers, truthfully. "I am content to wait longer; but perhaps some day, Uncle Reginald, you will tell me of my mother. I feel I should like to hear about her. I have heard the girls talking of their mothers, and I have envied them the love I have never known; but I am not a child now, uncle. I am a woman, and I am content to wait."

Sir Reginald does not reply at first. Then he speaks, and his voice is clear and cold.

"You shall hear of your mother, Sadie, some day—soon! It is but right that you should know of your parentage. And now, my child, tell me of your life. Of Miss Lotway I need not ask you if she cared for you well. I can see that. Chatter on, Sadie, I like to hear your voice."

She calls up all her spirits. It would be wrong to say that the girl is not disappointed, for she is most acutely so. The new excitement that has thrilled her through her journey, and before she saw her uncle, evaporates slowly. The veil is not to be lifted yet. She is pained; but she is not impatient. With womanly intuition Sadie guesses her childhood holds some sorrow which even now is counted great. And though she longs to know of her mother, she crushes her longing rather than probe a wound which years have failed to heal.

(To be continued.)

THE GOLDEN HOPE.

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CHAPTER XIV.—(continued.)

SIR RICHARD'S fine face grew pale and his blue eyes assumed a startled expression. He had too much delicacy to question the young girl farther, or to seek to discover her reasons for what seemed to him a very singular step. But that she had good reasons he was convinced.

One glance at her calm, resolute, truthful countenance sufficed to convince him that she was not about to act upon an ill-advised rashness, but that she would be guided by prudence and discretion. He said to himself that, whatever the cause of her hasty departure, it could involve no blame upon her part.

He absolved Lady Redwood equally from all blame. But it was Cecile whom he instinctively distrusted—Cecile, whose blonde beauty was insipid in his eyes, of whose character he had some faint suspicions, and of whose sentiments towards Hellice he had become aware by observing one or two petty displays of tyranny which had aroused his indignation and excited his chivalrous instincts.

He decided in his own mind that Hellice's proud spirit could no longer brook such treatment, and that she was going away where she could live in peace and quiet.

His love for her had increased in force and intensity. Already a score of times he had been upon the point of declaring his love for her, but the recollection that their acquaintance was so brief had each time deterred him.

He had, however, communicated his hopes and desires to Lady Redwood, who had, believing Hellice to be what Cecile had declared her to be, declined to further his suit, but left him free to address the maiden whenever he chose upon the subject nearest his heart. He had not meant to be precipitate.

He had resolved to woo her long and gently, as he would lure some rare and timid bird to his arms. He realised her exquisite delicacy, and feared to wound it by unseemly haste.

But he could not suffer her to go away, unknowing his love, and unconscious that her absence would be a heavy blow to him. No; he must tell her, and at once.

This resolution received new strength when he looked into her mournful face, and saw sad thoughts were busy at her heart.

"Hellice," he said gently, as if he feared to frighten her by the sound of his voice, "Hellice, I have something to tell you. We have known each other but a brief time if we count the days of our acquaintance; but there are some natures so in sympathy with each other that a single meeting, oftentimes a single look, is sufficient to knit them together in an enduring love. I am a grave, reserved man, Hellice, and I know not how to say what I wish without perhaps startling you. I have thought that our souls, yours and mine, were so akin to each other that only an electric spark was needed to weld them into one. That spark flashed from your eyes into mine the day you looked in upon me as I lay on the ground by the waterfall. Hellice—"

He paused, for the East Indian girl was looking at him half frightened and shy. A host of snowy petals had detached themselves from the orange branches above her and had showered themselves in a snowy, perfumed drift upon her dusky hair, over her dress, and upon the scarlet of her shawl.

He hands were clasped together in her lap, and her slender, swaying figure had assumed a half-drooping attitude.

The sight of that wondering, frightened face banished all connected thought from the mind of the young Baronet. One yearning alone possessed him—to fold her in his arms and beg her to become his wife. One fear beset him—that she would reject him.

Could it be that for him, whose life had been blighted once, there was reserved so great a happiness as Hellice's love?

He leaned forward, intending to tell her gently and gradually of his hopes and fears, but his great love for her shone in his eyes, irradiated his noble face, and quivered in his accents.

"Hellice," he began, then paused again, unable to complete the sentence he had contemplated. "Hellice," he said again, and then the passion flooding his soul gained possession of his tongue, and found rightful utterance.

It was no courtly speech he said, no high-flown rhapsody, only the earnest, truthful, passionate cry,—

"Hellice, darling, I love you!"

The young girl flashed a rapid, startled look at him, then her clear, sweet eyes drooped ably, and a lovely flush crept into the cheeks that a moment before had been as pale as the orange-flower petals nestling among the ripples of her hair.

Her hands trembled on her knees, and her lips quivered under the strange emotion filling her heart with quick pulsations.

The cry of the young Baronet had evoked an answering love in her soul. The sweet lesson learned by every young and generous heart was unfolding itself to her—the sweet old lesson of love.

"Speak to me, Hellice!" cried Sir Richard, with the impatience of an ardent young lover who dreads to hear a condemnatory sentence, and yet who would have the worst over. "Am I presumptuous? Have I spoken too soon? My darling, my life, my love!"

He stole one arm around her slender waist, and she did not repulse him. With infinite tenderness he drew her little head to his bosom, and she did not withdraw it. The orange branches showered down upon both a rain of snowy, perfumed leaves like a benison, the waves of fragrant air passed over them unheeded, the fountains tinkled their merry music unheard, for those young hearts were throbbing to a sweeter, tenderer music—the fragrance of an undying love pervaded their souls.

At length, with exquisite gentleness, Sir Richard bent over the maiden, gazed into her shining, happy eyes, and pressed upon her lips in silence the holy kiss of betrothal. It was not returned, but the young lover knew that Hellice's heart was all his own, and that she had given her tacit but solemn promise to become his wife.

"My beautiful, my own!" he whispered, with a lover's rapture.

At the sound of these words a heavy sigh, that seemed wrung from a human heart—a woman's sobbing sigh—floated to their ears. Both looked up startled, but no one was within sight. Apparently they were quite alone.

"What was that?" whispered Hellice.

"The breeze among the flowers, my darling!" answered Sir Richard.

Yet, strangely enough, Hellice thought of the pretended gipsy's prophecy, and Sir Richard's thoughts reverted to the threats of his vindictive enemy—his divorced wife.

CHAPTER XV.

I find thee apt;
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
Wouldst thou not stir in this?

—Hamlet.

The momentary shadow that had obscured the faces and hearts of the young lovers at the sound of that anguished sigh and the memory it evoked passed as swiftly as it had come before the sunshine of their love. Sir Richard Haughton bent again over the maiden, his breath caressing her rippling waves of perfumed hair, and his honest blue eyes beaming with a mighty and unutterable love such as had never before possessed his soul. And Hellice, shy and modest, with drooping head and scarlet cheek, half nestled beside him, wondering at the great flood of

happiness that had so suddenly illuminated her lonely life, transforming it into an Elysium.

"I never dreamed of joy like this!" said the young Baronet. "This moment more than recompenses me for all my past lonely, sorrowful years. Sea View will become a Paradise when you walk within its walls, Hellice. I had thought that woman's voice and woman's laughter would never be heard there again, but your presence will yet, I trust, make the sweetest sunshine and music in my home."

He spoke ardently, and with enthusiasm. Whatever he felt, he felt strongly. He possessed one of those strong, domestic natures peculiar to those of English race; but home to him could not be home unless it enshined a dear and loving presence. His life had been so long desolated by the treachery of his divorced wife that he could hardly comprehend his present joy, and he welcomed it as the storm-tossed and shipwrecked wanderer welcomes the clear-shining beacon that points out a safe and peaceful harbour. So Sir Richard, with no prophetic voice warning him of the future, fancied he had reached a secure haven at last.

"You speak as though you had never loved before, Richard," said Hellice, shyly, half frightened at the sound of her own sweet voice freighted with feeling. "Am I your first love?"

The young Baronet was struck with dismay at this question. A temptation seized him to confide the story of his life to Hellice, to lay bare before her the history of his early infatuation for Margaret Sorel, his marriage with her, and their early subsequent divorce. He knew now that he had never loved the handsome actress, that his fancy for her had been but fleeting; and even had she been worthy of his affection, his life could not have been otherwise than barren and desolate with her. He knew that Hellice, as his betrothed wife, had a right to his confidence, and yet he shrank from telling her. How could he pour into her pure ears the tale of Margaret Sorel's baseness and wickedness? How could he shock her with a recital of such unwomanliness as must puzzle her innocent soul to comprehend? He decided that he could not tell her now, but when she had become his wife, and no possible shadow could arise between them, he would confide to her the story of his early marriage. He had no fears that gossiping visitors would reveal it, for his affairs had been kept tolerably secret, the tragic events of his life having transpired at a considerable distance from his home. Lady Redwood was familiar with his history, but he had no doubts of her discretion or of that of the various members of her family.

He unwisely resolved, therefore, to defer his confidence for the present. Had some kind providence but even slightly lifted the veil of the future, he would have hastened to lay bare his life before his betrothed, and rested not until she had become familiar with its details. But not even a prophetic sadness warned him when he made his decision.

Gathering the maiden closer to him, and speaking with a truthful solemnity, made more effective by the slight pause that had preceded it, he said—

"Your are my first, last, and only love. Before I knew you I never even imagined what it was to love. You are the first to arouse the deeper and holier emotions of my nature, and when I cease to adore you my soul will cease to exist."

A bright, glad smile lighted up the face of Hellice, and at the same moment that long-drawn, sobbing sigh was heard again throughout the room. Then followed a sound like the rustling of a robe against the leaves of low-lying plants and shrubs; then a shadow flitted across the open doorway, and the perfume-laden breeze cast back to their ears a low, anguished cry that seemed wrung from the human heart in despair.

The lovers looked up quickly, but their glances assured them that they were alone.

"There must have been someone in here," said Hellice, wonderingly.

Sir Richard's heart echoed her words, and foreboded the name of the unhappy listener. Could Margaret Sorel have gained access to the conservatory from the garden, and had she heard the avowal of his love for Hellice? Tortured by the thought, he sprang up, traversed the length of the room quickly, and looked out at the open door. There was no trace of the hidden listener without, but Mr. Haughton was coming up the garden, fanning himself with his hat, and pausing now and then to look behind him with an exceedingly puzzled stare.

The young Baronet turned to retrace his steps to Hellice. He had made but two or three paces towards her, when his troubled gaze fell upon a bit of cambric gleaming like snow under the shade of a heavy-blossoming oleander tree. He sprang towards it and picked it up, shaking it as he did so a sickly perfume, which he recognised as the favourite odour of Margaret Sorel. It was not necessary that he should catch sight of the daintily-embroidered initials in the corner to assure himself that the handkerchief belonged to her. He flung it from him as though it had been a deadly serpent, and with ill-concealed agitation approached Hellice.

"It is nothing, my darling!" he said, tenderly, bending his face over the clustering orange-blossoms that continued to drift their fragrant petals upon the maiden's head, that she might not notice the deadly paleness that he felt creeping over his features. "I saw no one but my uncle in the garden."

He appeared to be inhaling the exquisite fragrance of the flowers, and Hellice, absorbed in sweet reveries, did not notice his anxious manner. He felt certain that his divorced wife had been present throughout his interview with Hellice, and that she would prove herself a bitter enemy to him and his betrothed. With a sudden feeling of danger, he resolved no longer to delay the communication of his early marriage.

"Hellice," he began, suddenly, and then paused, with a sinking heart, for his uncle had appeared at the threshold of the conservatory, and was about to enter their presence.

His opportunity had passed for the present, and he recognised the fact with a troubled foreboding.

The young girl looked up at the sound of her name, and at the same moment Mr. Haughton approached the young couple, his countenance wearing a look of abstraction, and his eyes beaming with benevolent interest upon them.

"Good morning, Miss Glintwick!" he said, with a very deep bow and a courteous wave of the hand. "I hope I see you well. I find you in your rightful home among the flowers, and not less fair than they. The bright exotic of Asia seems to flourish on English soil."

Hellice blushed rosily, and murmured her thanks for the compliment.

"A compliment was never better deserved, as Sir Richard can bear witness," replied Mr. Haughton, looking from one to the other of the young pair. "You look different from usual, Dick. What can be the matter? Have you young people quarrelled?"

"Not so, uncle," said the young Baronet, stealing an arm around the slender, upright figure of Hellice. "You must forgive me for forestalling you," and he smiled, "but I have asked Miss Glintwick to become my wife, and she has kindly consented to have pity upon me."

Mr. Haughton appeared astonished, and even overcome at this revelation. He caught hold of a small geranium for support, but his grasp was so vigorous as to uproot it. He then leaned against an orange-tree, bending it under his weight, and turned a glance full of sorrow and reproach upon his recreant nephew.

"Richard," he exclaimed, in tones of grief, "you knew I intended to marry Hellice myself!"

"But she preferred me, uncle."

"Is that so? Then it alters the case," said Mr. Haughton, resignedly. "Perhaps it is better so. I must remain wedded in science. Posterity would have a right to reproach me if I deserted the cause of science even for love. Hellice will live at Sea View, and I shall see her every day just the same. My blessings on your choice, Richard," and his manner became grandiloquent and paternal. "Hellice, I trust you will be as happy as you deserve."

He offered his hand, and imprinted a kiss upon Hellice's cheek as a token of his perfect resignation in her choice. Thoughts of his flying machine, which for a week had been quite forgotten, came to console him for his disappointment, and he became almost cheerful in view of his anticipated mechanical triumphs.

"Be happy, both of you," he enjoined them, with a display of paternal affection. "Let no pity for me mar your happiness. And speaking of happiness, it reminds me of that gipsy we met one day last week. I saw her steal out of the conservatory a few minutes ago, and make for the wood. I hope she has no more of her pleasant little prophecies for you! Did she say you would marry and be happy, and that I would attain to a towering position in the world of fame?"

"The—gipsy was here, then?" exclaimed the Baronet.

"Do you doubt your senses, Richard?" inquired his surprised relative.

"We did not see her, Mr. Haughton," said Hellice, unpleasantly impressed by the fact of the pretended gipsy's recent proximity.

Mr. Haughton expressed his astonishment at this assertion, and soon after, hearing voices in the drawing-room, proceeded thither. Sir Richard lingered behind him only long enough to solicit permission of his betrothed to confide their engagement to Lady Redwood, and then sought her at once—leaving Hellice alone, as the maiden desired.

She did not linger in the conservatory, where the flowers and fountains had been made witnesses of her sweet embarrassments and of her lover's tender caresses. She feared that Lady Redwood would seek her there, and she did not wish to meet even the Baroness then. Acting upon a sudden impulse, she glided out into the garden, and sought the shade of the wood, that she might undisturbedly commune with her heart.

The day was one of those sweet summer days when the bare sense of existence becomes a luxury.

The sunshine was warm and genial; the soft zephyrs were scarcely astir; and the air was full of fresh, delightful odours, that escaped from the garden flowers, and even from the brown, teeming earth.

The tamed deer roved through the wood, and even approached near to the dwelling; hares sounded across the paths more in frolic than in fear; and the birds held high jubilee upon their airy perches and in their leafy refuges.

It seemed to Hellice as though nature sympathised in her happiness, and every mate creature and inanimate thing rejoiced with her.

She took her way towards the waterfall, beside which she had first seen Sir Richard, walking with a bounding step and a light heart. Her face was sunshine incarnate, and her dark-grey eyes were full of a shy, sweet light that was inexpressibly beautiful.

She had proceeded nearly the whole distance, when a sudden groaning sound near at hand made her stop and look around her.

The sound proceeded from a little leafy dell a short way from the path, and Hellice, more than ever alive to sorrow, moved towards the spot. She was unprepared for the sight that met her gaze.

The pretended gipsy, who had warned her the previous week, lay prone upon the ground, grovelling like a wounded animal, and groaning as if in mortal pain.

Hellice's heart was touched at once. She came nearer, and inquired, softly,—

"Are you ill, gipsy? Can I——"

Softly as the words were uttered, and absorbed as was the woman in her anguish, she heard them, and looked up with an abrupt fierceness that almost startled the maiden.

"You here to mock me!" she ejaculated, struggling to a half-upright posture.

Hellice retreated a step, remembering her early fears that the gipsy had lost control of her mental faculties, but she answered, bravely and gently.

"Not to mock you, but to care for you, if you are ill! I was on my way to the cascade when I heard you groaning. Can I do anything for you?"

"If you had only heeded my warning!" cried the woman, in a childish voice, putting her hand over her eyes to shut out the bright and glowing vision of the youthful Hellice. "He loves you as he never loved before! I heard him say so—woe is me!" and she struck at her breast fiercely.

Hellice's suspicions began to grow stronger, and she looked pityingly at the woman she believed to be a lunatic. She was tempted to call a gardener to look after the gipsy, but there was no one near, and some impulse impelled her to remain with her. With a look of quiet resoluteness that impressed even the unhappy Margaret Sorel, she said,—

"Get up and tell me what troubles you. If you want comfort or assistance, perhaps I can aid you!"

The pretended gipsy struggled to her feet and turned her face towards Hellice.

The maiden started at the ravages a week had made in that bold gipsy-like beauty. The once red cheeks were thin and haggard; the black eyes gleamed from cavernous sockets with a lurid sort of light that was unpleasant to see; the forehead showed two or three deeply cut wrinkles; and the black hair that streamed from beneath the red hood looked uncombed and uncared for. All the softness and youth seemed pressed out of the wild, pale face.

The woman looked as though her nature had suffered from a volcano-like shock, whose lava tide had swept over her soul, burying under its crushing wave all that was good, true and tender in her.

She smiled bitterly at Hellice's startled look, and exclaimed,—

"Yes. I have changed since first we met, lady; and so have you. The brighter bloom in your cheeks has fed on mine; the happiness which possesses your heart has consumed mine. You think me insane. I wish I were," and she uttered a wild, discordant laugh that made Hellice shudder. "But I am not, and I shall use my reason to wreath other hearts as mine is wrecked!"

Hellice knew not what to reply, and while she hesitated Margaret Sorel continued, with an hysterical sob,—

"I was in the conservatory and heard all he said to you. You blushed and smiled like a child, and he worshipped you as he never worshipped me. I heard what he said about never having loved before, but it's false—false! He loved me for years, and he would love me now, had not your baby face come between us!"

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked Hellice, willing to humour the supposed fancies of the woman.

"Of Sir Richard Haughton!" declared the pretended gipsy, endeavouring to speak calmly.

"What is Sir Richard Haughton to you?" inquired the Baronet's betrothed.

"What is he to me?" half shrieked the divorced wife. "He is my life, my strength, my love! He is more to me than anyone else in the wide world! He is what he can never be to you—my husband!"

"Your husband!" repeated Hellice, growing pale. "This is a strange fancy—"

"It is not a fancy, Miss Glintwick," declared Margaret Sorel, forcing her passions under control, and looking steadily at the maiden. "I am not deceiving you any more than I am deceiving myself. I am Sir

Richard Haughton's wife, and I can prove myself such!"

Hellice did not believe the assertion, but she felt her heart grow faint within her. The woman spoke with such impressive earnestness, and, wild as she seemed, she did not yet act as Hellice imagined an insane person would do. Still, the maiden assured herself, she must be a monomaniac. Perhaps she had seen the young Baronet often, and had fallen in love with him, forgetting the difference in rank and the social bar between them.

"I will tell you my story, Miss Glintwick," said the pretended gipsy, speaking in a suppressed tone, as if she could with difficulty keep the rein upon her passions. "I am not a gipsy, as my dress declares me to be. I am the daughter of a poor gentleman, who educated his children with difficulty, and when died, leaving them to make their way through the world as best they could. My brothers were thriftless fellows, who hated work and were unable to support me. I discovered that I possessed histrionic talent, and became an actress. I was successful, and was soon able to support my brothers as well as myself in luxury. I was courted and flattered as every successful actress is; but I never loved until I met Sir Richard Haughton. He was Mr. Haughton then—a boy of twenty—and I was older than he. He was charmed with my talent, delighted with my beauty—in short, he fell in love with me!"

She paused to note the effect of these words upon Hellice. The maiden stood, pale and quiet, with a look of serene confidence in her eyes, yet with an anxious smile on her lips. Her confidence in her lover remained unshaken, yet a vague sense of coming trouble began to make itself felt at her heart. She was convinced by the woman's language that she was no gipsy, and this discovery added to her disquietude.

Dissatisfied that she had not yet weakened the girl's faith in Sir Richard, the divorced wife resumed.

"The wooing of Richard Haughton was so different from that of others that I could not do otherwise than yield to it. He offered me an honourable love; he addressed me as his equal in rank; he was so ardent, so impulsive, so unremitting in his attentions that I grew to love him better than life. He urged me to marry him, and I consented. I knew his father would never consent to our marriage, so I urged that it should be a secret one. He agreed to my suggestion, and we were married secretly, but in church, and in the presence of a sufficient number of witnesses."

Still Hellice showed no agitation, no token of implicit belief in her words, and Margaret Sorel anathematized the perfect trust with which the maiden regarded her betrothed. She saw that absolute proofs would be necessary before Hellice would credit her statements, and she hated the girl in her heart.

"We were married," she said, and her tone was almost a wail with the bitter memories arising in her soul. "We went to my lodgings to partake of our wedding-breakfast and to secure our luggage, intending to set out immediately for Sea View. Richard left the room in which I was, for some reason or another, to call a cab, or post a letter, and he returned sooner than I expected. Stopping at the door of my room a moment, he overheard my conversation with my brother. He heard enough to induce him to believe that I married him for rank and wealth only, and he burst in upon us, upbraided me, and then left me for ever. He came to Sea View, inherited the title and property, and during all these years has led a hermit-like existence. We have never met until lately. He loved me, Miss Glintwick, as he will never love again, as he does not, and cannot, love you. I believe he loves me yet, and that he would sue for my love again if it were not for you!"

This partially true but garbled statement, delivered with an earnestness that resembled truth, could not altogether fail of effect. Hellice began to believe that the actress really

loved Sir Richard, but she placed no credence in the assertion concerning the marriage.

"Your story cannot be quite true," she said, simply. "Sir Richard would not have asked me to become his wife if he were wedded to another."

Margaret Sorel's brow darkened.

"Shall I prove my words?" she asked, quickly. "Would you believe me if you were to see my marriage certificate? Perhaps you are familiar with Sir Richard's handwriting. Look here!"

She drew from her bosom a small packet of documents tied carefully with ribbon. Unloosing the packet, she took from the rest a paper which she handed to Hellice in silence. It proved to be a certificate of marriage between Margaret Sorel, spinster, and Richard Haughton, bachelor—signed and witnessed in accordance with the forms prescribed by law. It was old and worn, and seemed to have been carried for years.

Hellice's brain reeled as she read it, and the hands with which she returned it trembled as with awe.

"Read these," said Margaret Sorel, giving her the letters.

Hellice took them and perused them. She was already familiar with Sir Richard's rather peculiar handwriting, he having contributed to Cecile's album, and given her a written copy of an old ballad Hellice had desired. She recognized the penmanship at once, and many of the expressions in the letters were familiar to her. In perfect sympathy with her lover, familiar already with his modes of thought, and his manner of expression, she could not fail to recognize his hand in these epistles. They were crude, boyish letters, impulsive and loving. Some pleaded for a marriage, and in one the writer spoke of having made every final arrangement for the union, and longed for the morrow that would make Margaret his wife.

They were in truth Sir Richard's letters, and as Hellice read them the conviction of their authorship forced itself upon her.

"This was his earliest gift to me," said the divorced wife, drawing forth a pretty jewelled locket enclosing Sir Richard's portrait. "Look at it!"

Hellice took it and looked long and earnestly at the fair, boyish face portrayed there. The honest blue eyes, the smiling mouth, the frank, open countenance, all were recognized at once, although Sir Richard now was a calm, grave, dignified man, rarely given to smiles, and more haughty and reserved than frank and open. Comparing the picture before her with that engraved on her heart, Hellice felt that her lover must have once looked like the smiling portrait, and that some great sorrow had made him the man he now was.

She gave back the locket wearily, and Margaret Sorel then took from her finger a slender golden circlet.

"That was my wedding-ring," she said. "Look at the inscription within!"

Hellice obeyed, reading the words: "Richard to Margaret," and after them a date which she repeated as if wishing to remember it.

"Have I given you proofs enough?" demanded the divorced wife, marvelling at the girl's calmness.

"Quite enough," was the low response. "And you are his wife now?"

"Certainly," declared Margaret Sorel, unblushingly. "That is a strange question to ask."

"I know it, but I thought it so strange that Sir Richard should ask me to be his wife if he had one already. He knew you the other day, I suppose. I can hardly believe all this. My brain seems on fire."

She looked up at her enemy with a perplexed expression in her dusky eyes, and her face was white as snow, except in the cheeks, where a feverish red burned, glowed, and flickered like the wavering flame of a lamp. She put back her heavy hair from her forehead in a bewildered sort of way, and said, pitifully,—

"I thought he loved me. I thought he had a right to love me. How could he say such things if he had no right to do so?"

Margaret Sorel was not all bad. She had hated Hellice for the joy and pride of her triumphant love, hate her for her brilliant beauty and youthfulness; but now, when she met the gaze of those sweet blue eyes she turned away her head in sorrow. She was not generous enough to declare that the law had given Richard back his freedom; she was not generous enough to yield him to this younger, lovelier rival, but she did at that moment grieve that Hellice should have been the one chosen by him, and consequently been placed in the way of her revenge.

"It is hard at first," she thought, "but she will get over it by-and-by. She is only a child now, and I will not give up my life to gratify a childish love. No, no! He is mine, and I will claim him!"

Yet she spoke kindly and sympathetically to Hellice, striving to soothe her strange, tearless grief. Her words fell upon unheeding ears. The maiden looked at her as if trying to understand and then shook her head sadly, murmuring,—

"I thought him so good and noble! He is so, I am sure; and but for this temptation he would never have done wrong. He loves me now, but if you can win him back you are free to do so."

"You will not take him from me then?" cried the divorced wife, eagerly.

Hellice looked surprised at the question.

"He can be nothing more to me, not even a friend," she said, with strange calmness. "Our engagement was but a mockery. I cannot meet him again. I had intended to go away from Redwoode. I see now that I must go. You have nothing more to say to me?"

Margaret Sorel replied in the negative, wondering anew at the quietude of Hellice, her singular calmness, and deciding in her own mind that the girl's love had been but weak after all.

"Then I will not stay here longer," said Hellice. "You need grieve no longer on my account, poor Margaret. Sir Richard is free so far as I am concerned."

She bowed, and walked away with that wild grace that distinguished her, and the divorced wife, looking after her, muttered,—

"She is only a child, and I am glad the blow has not fallen heavily upon her. My love is my life, my soul, but she can give Richard up without a tear. It is to me he belongs, and if he will not have me he shall have no wife at all!"

With a bitter smile she stalked away in the direction of the kiosk.

If she could have followed Hellice to the dwelling, to her secluded tower-chamber, and seen her fall prostrate upon the floor, giving way to such a tempest of grief as seldom tortures any except the young, she would have said that Hellice's love was not a weak and childish passion, but that it was the love of a lifetime. The young girl abandoned herself to her grief. She had known sorrows before, but not sorrow like this. Her lonely heart had responded to Sir Richard, and to believe him false or treacherous was an anguish too great for endurance. We will not dwell on the maiden's grief. Her joy in his love had been rapture; her sorrow was correspondingly extreme. Battling with her misery, she did not know that more than once someone knocked at her door for admittance and went away uncertain if she were in her room, nor did she even guess how Sir Richard lingered in the drawing-room, anxious to communicate the fact of Lady Redwoode's approval of their engagement, and longing to feast his eyes upon the beauty of his betrothed, and to comfort his heart by the renewed assurance of her love. But Hellice appeared not, and Sir Richard, troubled and anxious at her strange disappearance, took his leave, promising himself that he would return in the evening and confide to her his early history.

(To be continued.)

FAIR ELOISE.

—:—

FAIR Eloise upon a mossy knoll
Beside a little murmur'ing brook reclined;
The sunbeams downward from the hilltops
stole,

And with her golden tresses intertwined.

The air was balmy and the day was old;

The picture that she made was wond'rous
fair;

You'd scarce believe me if the half I told
Of all the charms of the sweet maiden there.

Her eyes were then the summer skies more
blue,

Her hair, the rays of the declining sun
Quite put to shame, and oh! the rosy hue

Of her sweet lips was ne'er by rose outdone.

She clasped within her hand a blossom fair—

I could not plainly from my outlook see

What flow'r it was, nor did I rudely care

To break upon her little reverie.

She pressed the flower fondly to her lips.

Then oh! my heart with envy so did sting,

"Whence comes the inspiration that she sips
From that dumb, unappreciative thing?"

Nor could I quite restrain the little sigh

That well'd up from my disappointed heart,

When suddenly my erstwhile listless eye

Grew bright, and into life I seemed to start.

Behold! the flower she so fondly press'd

Was one I tossed to her but yester'even,

As she was laughing at some trifling jest,

And scarcely had, I thought, my action seen,

One instant more, and seated by her side,

I clasped her hand in mine and tenderly

I drew her to my heart with loving pride—

But why tell all that passed 'twixt her and
me?

I loved, she loved: what more need be ex-
plained?

And she was there, and I was, and alone

We, on the margin of the brook, remained,

And sauntered homeward as the sun went
down.

C. S. J.

KENNETH'S CHOICE.

—:—

CHAPTER XI.

KENNETH ST. CLUNE was not a model son. He was too like his father—open-hearted, generous, and impulsive—to appreciate the worldly wisdom and love of bargaining which were his mother's chief traits. Also, he could never comprehend her second marriage.

He was too childish at the time to feel more than an instinctive dislike to his stepfather, but as he grew up and gathered from other sources Mr. Marks's character and antecedents, he felt almost amazed that his mother could possibly have preferred marrying him to remaining the widow of the Honorable Douglas St. Clune.

Then, too, their opinions had always jarred. The widow's one aim was for her son to ingratiate himself with Lord Combermere, and become master of the Abbey. Kenneth, as we know, had shrank even from showing the affection he really felt for his cousin, lest it might seem like courting his favour.

This caused endless differences between the mother and son which you may be sure her disapproval of his love for Miss Dean did not soften.

Kenneth had gone to say "good-bye" to his mother before they went abroad, and high words passed between them. Mrs. Marks had learned from Hilton Barber the contents of Lord Combermere's will, and now the choice between wealth and poverty was yet open to her son.

She did not scruple to tell Kenneth she re-

joiced Miss Dean had had the prudence to set him free, and that now he could not refuse to do his duty and propose to his cousin. A stormy scene ensued, and finally, sore and angry, Kenneth set forth on his travels with very harsh thoughts of the woman who bore him.

He had often wondered in himself while abroad, how, when, and where his next meeting with his mother would take place. He had felt, after their parting, he could not bear just as though nothing had happened. If he went to the bijou villa, it must be on the distinct understanding he pledged himself to nothing by the visit, and that it did not mean he had come round to his mother's views; but never in his wildest dreams had he pictured his mother in trouble, and himself summoned to the rescue.

Truth to say, there was nothing soft or appealing about Mrs. Marks. She was one of those women who always seem capable of looking out for their own interests, and who—

to do them justice—usually do so. Now all was changed. Mr. Ashwin's account had alarmed Kenneth, but even that had not prepared him for the reality. His handsome, self-contained, dignified mother transformed into a nervous, trembling woman who shuddered hysterically at every sound, and actually clung to him for protection, begging him not to leave her!

It was so incredible Kenneth could hardly realize it.

And then, when he and Miss Taylor at last persuaded her to confide to them the cause of her terrors, her answer was the most marvellous thing of all. They asked her from what they were to protect her, and she said,—

"My husband's ghost!"

Kenneth looked at Miss Taylor, but her eyes were fixed steadily on the ground. She would not meet his gaze, and her silence seemed to say she would rather he asked her no questions till they were alone. The first thought which seized poor Lord Combermere was that his mother was mad. The second that she had been dabbling in the delights of table-rapping and spiritualistic *seances*, until she grew bewildered. But neither of these explanations were probable.

Mrs. Marks was one of those selfish, complacent women who are the last people in the world to excite themselves into madness; and as to table-turning and the like she had always maintained they were rank impostures.

Looking back to the days of his childhood, Ken recollects vaguely she had had a few cherished superstitions. Nothing would have induced her to walk under a ladder or begin an enterprise on a Friday; while she never listened willingly to a ghost-story. Wonderful as it sounded, her son came reluctantly to the conclusion she really believed what she affirmed, and that her present fears were solely due to some fancied apparition of the late Mr. Marks, though what could possibly have given her cause to fancy she had seen such a thing, Ken was at a loss to guess.

"My dear mother!" he said, soothingly, "there are no such things as ghosts. Ask Emily, who is a strong-minded young lady, and she will tell you the same thing."

"Indeed, dear Mrs. Marks!" said Miss Taylor, gravely, "you need not be alarmed; the spirit of the departed cannot return to earth again, but await in Paradise the last great Day!"

"Ugh!" said Mrs. Marks, viciously; "of course you say that as your father was a clergyman."

It was strange to notice in her terror how utterly the veneer of fine ladyhood had passed from her talk and manners. Alicia Grant was not a lady when Douglas St. Clune married her. Nearly thirty years of good society had given her an external polish which would have deceived many; but in her terror she lost it, and passed back into the under-educated young person of her youth.

"But I have nothing to do with the clergy," said Kenneth, quietly; "and I tell you the

same thing. It is quite impossible that you have seen a ghost! To begin with, there are no such things. Then if there were, Mr. Marks would not be entitled to one, since, according to all legends, they belong only to great families, and he was a self-made man."

He thought this agreement must be telling, but it made no impression. The tears rolled slowly down his mother's face.

"He was murdered," she said, peevishly, "so no wonder his spirit cannot rest!"

Kenneth possessed a rare gift—perfect self-control on an emergency. He was really deeply bewildered by his mother's statement. But he managed to appear as though they sounded to him the merest folly. He treated Mrs. Marks, in fact, with the well-meant severity often used to trace the nerves of a person in hysterics. He betrayed not a pang of the anxiety and pity he really felt, but returned coolly.

"If his spirit has rested for eighteen years—nearly nineteen, indeed—I don't see why it should begin to walk now, mother!"

"But it does!"

"Then it shall not walk here," was the resolute reply. "Emily shall get the servants to make me up a bed somewhere, and I will stay and guard the house. I promise you I will make short work of Mr. Ghost!"

Mrs. Marks looked relieved from a terrible dread. Kenneth had expected her to declare no one could keep out ghosts, that they penetrated through locked doors and bolted windows; but she seemed quite satisfied.

"You promise me, Ken," she said appealingly; "you promise me you will stay here all night? You are not deceiving me?"

"On my word, mother, I will stay. You will find me at breakfast if you are well enough to come down to it to-morrow—and I assure you no ghost shall enter the premises."

"It's the back drawing-room window," said Mrs. Marks, as though she were telling of something real that had actually happened; "that he comes by, and I don't know the time, but it's always before twelve. Emily, I will go to bed now; you need not stay to help me, for I feel much better. Go down with Kenneth, and see he has some supper."

The two were thankful for the dismissal; they longed for a chance to consult each other. Kenneth rang and ordered some strong coffee; then, with almost brotherly kindness, he put Emily into an easy chair and made her drink a cup before he would let her speak to him at all.

"I must go," she said, trying to get up.

"Why?"

"Your room—it must be got ready."

"I have no intention of going to bed. It's lucky I'm in a frock-coat, isn't it, for the same costume must appear at breakfast, and an evening suit would look dissipated."

"Do you really mean to sit up all night?"

"I do; I shall send you to bed in an hour, but first I must have some talk with you. How many servants are there?"

"Only two sleeping in the house."

"Are they trustworthy?"

"Thoroughly—they both know Mrs. Marks is suffering from a nervous attack, and that I sent for you."

"Right. You had better tell them she is much easier, and send them to bed. I suppose they sleep upstairs?"

"At the top of the house."

"Send them there at once, please. There is evidently some mystery going on, and before I talk about it I must be sure they are out of hearing."

"You might trust them," said Emily, indignantly. "Cook is from Combermere, and the parlour-maid is a niece of hers. I am certain they would not lend themselves to any deception."

"There is no reason they should not enjoy a good night's rest," said Ken, coolly; "send them to bed, and then come back to me."

She was gone hardly five minutes, when they heard the heavy tread of the servants as they went upstairs. A moment more, and the

gas died slowly out of the burners; Lord Combermere jumped up and lighted two wax candles on the mantelpiece, or they would have been left in total darkness.

For some people the interview might have been embarrassing—a young man and a girl, both of marriageable age, both tolerably attractive, alone at such an hour, with a sleeping household over their head; but no thought of the oddness of their *ille-a-tte* troubled either Emily or the Earl. To begin with, they had been on almost fraternal terms in their childhood; and, besides that, their hearts were each occupied with the image of a person quite other than their old playfellow. The thoughts of Nell would guard Lord Combermere against all other fascinations. And there was a certain curate about whom Emily's warmest hopes were centred.

Young as they were, Miss Taylor and the Earl could discuss the matter which troubled them without a single thought of sentiment. It was more like two friends, or two schoolfellows, meeting after a long interval, and at once directing all their energies to unravel a mystery which had sprung up during their separation.

"Tell me all you can," said Lord Combermere, simply. "And, Emily, don't spare me because I am her son. If there's anything I ought to know tell it me, however painful the knowledge must be!"

Emily opened her eyes.

"You speak as if you judged Mrs. Marks very harshly!" she said, reprovingly. "I will tell you all I can; but, let me say first, all that troubles her might have happened to anyone else. I know you and your mother don't always think alike; but, Lord Combermere, as far as I know about the matter, it might have happened to the Countess herself or even my own mother."

"Go on."

"It was about a week ago. Mrs. Marks had been to a party, and I was alone, practising in the back drawing-room. The servants had gone to bed, so the house was very quiet. When I stopped playing I heard a strange noise, like footsteps."

"I always thought ghosts were noiseless in their movements," said the Earl, sarcastically.

"Please don't say anything until you have heard all. I felt frightened, and I went upstairs. My own room is next to the servants, and I was glad to feel myself near someone. I scolded myself well for my nervous fancies, but in the end I dropped asleep, and it was only the sound of Mrs. Marks's carriage coming home woke me."

"And it was then—?"

"Very nearly twelve; it struck the quarter as I went downstairs. I met Mrs. Marks at the door of the back drawing-room. Lord Combermere, I don't know what you will think of me, but you told me to tell you all. I am certain someone had been in the room since I left it!"

"Nonsense! Why?"

"Because there was a general air of things being disarranged; and a little blotting-case your mother uses to write her letters on was lying open on the ground. I stooped to pick it up, and Mrs. Marks told me I looked very tired. I had better go back to bed."

"Well?"

"I had hardly reached my own room when I heard a piercing shriek. I rushed down again, and found Mrs. Marks lying on the floor in a swoon!"

"I never knew my mother faint!"

"Nor I."

"And you picked her up as you had previously done by the blotting-case? The ghost seems to have a propensity for knocking things down."

"Please don't laugh!"

"Emily," he said, kindly, "don't you see I only try to laugh because I am most terribly bewildered. So far from jesting at your fears, I am only sorry for them. It must have been a terrible time for you!"

"Mrs. Marks revived at last, and cook and I got her upstairs. She asked me to sleep on the sofa in her room, and I was very glad to do so for company. The night passed very peacefully, and in the morning she seemed herself.

"Didn't she refer at all to the swoon?"

"Yes. She said she ought not to have sat up so late. The remark puzzled me, for it was not twelve, and she is usually much later. She said nothing of any fright. I went round the back drawing-room myself, and I could miss nothing, so I decided my own fear of someone having entered the room must have been an idle fancy, and said nothing about it to Mrs. Marks."

"In fact you were both hiding something from each other. You kept from my mother your suspicion the house had been entered, and she did not let you know what had caused her swoon. It would have been better far had you confided in each other."

"Was it very wrong? I thought Mrs. Marks would only laugh at me, and—"

"It was not enough at all. My mother is just the woman not to believe anything she does not see herself. If she had shared your fright, she would probably have laughed at it; but I am interrupting you."

"We went out as usual that day; but when the evening came Mrs. Marks kept me with her, she seemed as if she could not bear to be left alone. We sat in the front drawing-room, with the folding doors locked, a thing I had never known her order before."

"And all went well?"

"Perfectly. The next day, Mrs. Marks seemed to have thrown off all her alarm. I went to bed at eleven, and she said she should sit up a little longer over her accounts."

"In the back drawing-room?"

"Yes."

"And did you hear any noise?"

"I am ashamed to say when I am once asleep it takes a great deal to wake me; but in the morning I went down for a walk, and I then found Mrs. Marks—it was before the servants were stirring—sitting on the sofa wringing her hands. She had not been in bed at all. From that time she has not been beyond the dressing-room, and she has seemed in an agony of nervous fear; the slightest sound will send her into hysterics. I had the knocker tied up, thinking the noise would trouble her. She did nothing but sit in a chair with an awful fixed look of expectancy, as though she knew that something terrible was coming, and would fain be ready for it. At last I persuaded her to send for Mr. Ashwin; but when he came she was in strong hysterics, so his visit was useless. Then I suggested sending for you. We had not known before you were in town, and she caught at the idea eagerly. I think your coming will save her life. She has hardly had an hour's proper sleep since that awful time when I found her here. When we left the room just now she whispered to me, 'Ken is here, I can sleep now.' Even if she is awake to all her terrors, a good night's rest will be invaluable to her. I think if you had not come, a few more hours of that awful feverish wakefulness must have killed her, or, at the least, unknocked her reason."

"You heard what she said to me to-night, that she begged me to protect her from her husband's ghost?"

"Yes."

"Had you had any idea before what it was she feared particularly?"

"No. I knew she had some special dread, and I begged her to tell me what it was, but she only shook her head, and said I should not understand; I was only a child nineteen years ago, and could not remember. Over and over again I asked her what it was she saw that fearful night, and what happened to give her such a fear of this room, but it was no use. I think she would have liked to tell me, but some inner feeling held her back. I was at my wit's end. I sent for the doctor, but she would say nothing to him, and I dared not

tell him all I have told you ; it seemed like a breach of confidence in me. I could only wait until the bright thought came of asking her to send for Mr. Ashwin."

"What did the doctor say ?"

"That she had sustained a terrible shock to the nervous system, as if I did not know that before. He sent some composing mixture, but she wouldn't take it."

"My poor Emily, you have had a weary time of it."

"I got frightened," confessed the girl. "You see, Mrs. Marks would not tell me what she feared ; and to see the awful terror she was in, and yet be powerless to help her, was very painful. I know the Countess was in town, and I would have sent for her, but your mother forbade it."

"I am glad of that. Poor Aunt Emily would be simply terrified, and of no real help since my mother never took to her. Emily, do you feel strong enough to stay here while I put things right ?"

"As if I would leave Mrs. Marks now !" said the girl, half indignantly. "Why, Lord Combermere, if I went away while she was in this state, I think the fears which another would pass over to me. Apart from all thought of my duty to her, I should like to know the truth of the mystery."

"And Mr. Mayo ?"

Miss Taylor blushed.

"What of him ?"

"I understood he had a right to express an opinion of your doings, that's all. Am I to congratulate you, Emily ?"

"Some day," said the girl, blushing. "We hope it may be next year. Edward has a charming curacy in Kent, and he thinks by January—"

"A curacy ? You are not ambitious, child ?"

"What is ambition if we are happy ?" said Emily, archly. "Besides, this is not a common curacy !"

"What makes it an uncommon one ?"

"The vicar is his own patron, and he means to give the living to Edward."

"Indeed ! And where is it ?"

"Marden."

"Where ?"

"Ah, you never heard of it, perhaps ; it is only a little village near Maidstone."

Never heard of it ! Only a little village ! To his life's end Kenneth St. Clune would remember Marden for the sake of the blue-eyed girl who had once lived there ; but men don't wear their hearts on their sleeve, and so he answered quite composedly,—

"It so happens I have heard of Marden. In fact, I went there over a year ago."

"Ah ! Edward was not there then ; he only went last summer."

"And you think 'Edward,' as you call him, will have no objection to your remaining in this tomb of mystery ?"

"I am sure he would wish me to do what is right ; and, Lord Combermere, please, I want to stay."

"And I am only too thankful for you to do so. Then that's settled. Now, Emily, for the next question—what has my mother seen ?"

Emily shivered.

"I don't know."

"Neither do I ; but I mean to find out."

"How ?"

"And you must help me. Prosaic folks like you and I don't believe in ghosts, but there is a strong vein of superstition in my mother's nature. I think we may safely conclude she believes that she has seen her husband's ghost ?"

"Oh, yes."

"Has she ever spoken of him to you ?"

"Never."

"I don't know much of him. I was under seven when he died ; but since I have been grown up I have gathered he was not exactly a connection to be proud of. Now, Emily, dismissing the ghost theory, we have but one alternative to fall back on. Someone dressed themselves up as Mr. Marks's ghost to work on my mother's fears."

"But what good would it do them ?"

"I don't know ; I confess I am all in the dark ; I can only just grasp the main fact. I am pretty certain I am right in that."

Emily shook her head.

"If the object was to gain money, why didn't they do it before ?"

"I told you I couldn't fill in the details."

"It would have been so much easier," persisted Emily. "How could anyone remember just how he looked nearly twenty years ago, and Mrs. Marks would not have been frightened unless the resemblance was very real ?"

"My mother is fond of money," said Kenneth, slowly ; "she may have refused to help Marks's poor relations (though I never heard of his having any), and one of them got up this device to alarm her."

Emily shuddered.

I suppose he was really dead ?"

"My dear child !" exclaimed Lord Combermere, startled, "you must be getting as nervous as my poor mother, and I shall have the Rev. Edward charging me of having ruined your health, if you take such ideas into your head. Poor Marks is as dead as a doornail ! He was murdered."

"Who by ?"

She little knew how much poor Kenneth would have given to be able to answer that question so as to satisfy himself.

"I do not know."

"And why ?"

"No one knows."

"He seems to have been a strange man altogether," said Emily, sagely.

"He was. He inherited a handsome fortune from his partner just before his marriage with my mother. He was most economical ; the last man in the world to be reckless with money ; but, after his death, no trace of the legacy could be found."

Emily looked up.

"Does Mrs. Marsh know of it ?"

"I believe (remember, please, I was a small child at the time of the murder) it was supposed the murderer made off with the spoil. It had been realized a few days before, and was in gold and notes in a small iron box about a foot square, with bands round it to make it stronger, and a patent lock. I have been told at the time of the murder, and for years after, my poor mother cherished the dream of finding this box either herself, or through the police. Its contents would have made her a rich woman, you know, so perhaps it is natural she should have harped on it. The late Earl told me she could not see a box of the same size and description for years without suspecting it to be the one stolen from her husband."

"How very strange ! Do you know she thinks of it still ?"

"No. Has she spoken of it to you ?"

"Yes, twice ; but you see not having heard the story I could not understand what she meant. The first time was as she was recovering from the swoon. She just whispered to me, 'It must be the box. Fancy coming for the box after all these years, and you know I never had it, or I should have been a rich woman !'"

"And the second time ?"

"It was when she was expecting Mr. Ashwin. She shook her head sadly, and told me you said he was clever, but she had never much faith in him, for he could not find the box !"

"It would not do her much good if he did," said Lord Combermere, simply. "It is hardly likely the thief would not use the money purchased by his crime ; and as by culpable carelessness no list of the numbers of the notes was taken, the lucky possessor could spend every penny."

"But was no one suspected of the murder ?"

"Yes," and he told her the story of Andrew Gordon as the world knew it. Emily shook her head.

"He didn't do it, I am sure !"

"How can you be sure ?" asked Kenneth,

impressed by her words, and feeling he would give years of his life to prove them true.

"Why, he had no cause !" said Emily, quickly. "If he had meant to commit murder he would have done it in his time of poverty, not when a good situation was ready for him. Besides, he died of heart disease !"

"What has that to do with it ?"

"My sister is a hospital nurse, and so I know a little of illness. If Mr. Gordon had heart disease so seriously as to cause his death, the excitement of killing a fellow-creature would have produced the catastrophe at once. Now you say he went home well and cheerful, and spent some hours happily with his family. No, Lord Combermere. Whoever killed your stepfather be sure that man did not !"

"And yet his memory must lie under the stigma !"

"Not with honest-minded people, who are not blinded by prejudice !"

"It has always seemed to me terrible. His widow died believing him a murderer. If ever his daughter bore his name she would be doomed as a criminal's child !"

"Nonsense !"

"It is quite true."

"It is the merest prejudice. Do you mean to tell me," cried Emily, warming with excitement, "that a girl brought up in utter ignorance of her parentage could be condemned by anyone if they learned that when she was a baby her father was accused (not condemned, mind !) of murder ? Why, this is absurd !"

"It is the way of the world. No mother would let her children associate with such a one. No man would dare to marry her !"

"Then he ought to be ashamed of himself," said Miss Taylor, flatly ; "it's quite bad enough for children to be punished for what their parents do, mind you. I think that's cruelty ; but to make them suffer just for what their parents *may perhaps* have done, is simple barbarity. Why, I thought the English law held everyone innocent till they were proved to be guilty ! You seem to go right against that when you are so cruelly hard on Andrew Gordon's child !"

He hard on her ! He who would so gladly have taken her to his heart and sheltered her from all pain ! But he only shook hands with Emily a little more warmly than usual, and said not another word of the matter they had disputed over.

But not till long afterwards did she understand why, when he had given her her candle, and bade her sleep well and forget all about ghosts, he added, in a voice of peculiar tenderness—

"Heaven bless you, Emily ! There would be less sorrow in the world if all women had your charity !"

She was gone.

He heard her light footsteps mount the stairs and die away. He was alone, and no nearer solving the problem of his mother's fears than when he left her room. He knew the house well, for Mrs. Marks had insisted on his going with her to see it before it was taken, and once or twice since he had been escorted by her on a triumphant progress round it to view alterations and improvements.

It was just such a house as a widow of aristocratic ideas and moderate (very moderate of late) income would be likely to take, provided she had not a family to exceed the very limited sleeping accommodation.

It was semi-detached and in shape high and narrow, the architect evidently having tried to do with as little frontage as possible. All the offices were underground, and, as the door leading to the basement premises was locked at night, Kenneth felt he might dismiss that part of the house from his inquiries.

To begin with, the ground-floor, the dining-room, a long narrow room, ran from back to front, and one end had been fitted up as a library, and with curtains drawn made quite a separate apartment, but both windows were provided with heavy shutters, which Kenneth



[AWAKENED TO A CLUE TO THE MYSTERY.]

found securely fastened. Half way upstairs was a little room of no particular name, where needlework was done or servants interviewed. This had no shutters, but the window was so small and so high above the ground, access seemed impossible from the yard running at the back of the house; above where the drawing-rooms, divided by folding-doors. It was here Mrs. Marks's improvements began. To hide the view of the yard she had had the window of the back drawing-room filled with glacier, in imitation of stained glass; and a balcony beyond, thrown out and covered in, so as to form a mild attempt at a conservatory—very mild since the covering only extended—on two sides; but still green shrubs flourished there, and had a very pretty effect.

Mrs. Marks's next-door neighbour had emulated her example, and both ladies being of a thrifty turn—and, besides, being friends, and trusting to each other's honesty—no barrier, except the original iron railing, which had served to divide the balconies originally, separated the rival conservatories.

It flashed on Kenneth suddenly it would be possible—nay, easy—for his mother's next-door neighbour to effect an entry into the back drawing room by way of the conservatories. He dismissed the idea at once.

Mrs. Warburton was a rich Anglo-Indian widow, many years older than Mrs. Marks, who kept no company, and retired to rest at ten every night of her life. She had the warmest admiration for her next-door neighbour, founded, perhaps, on her aristocratic connections; in fact, the two widows "got on" perfectly, and it was preposterous to think Mrs. Warburton would have lent herself to any plan likely to alarm or molest Mrs. Marks. Besides, apart from wish, she would not have had the power. She had lived in India thirty years. Mr. Marks must have been a boy when she went, and when she returned he had been dead ten; therefore she could never have seen him, and could have been of no use

in helping anyone to get themselves up to represent him, even if she had known anyone likely to want to play such a trick.

"It gets more puzzling at every turn," thought poor Kenneth. "If something isn't found out, I shall have my mother in a brain fever. And yet I'm sure I don't see how to set about finding anything out. I thought I had made a brilliant discovery when I told Emily the ghost was someone dressed up to represent Mr. Marks; but I'm afraid she's right, and the theory's improbable, as she says. Why should anyone want to represent him; and if anyone did, they could only get in through the Warburtons, and the old lady is too old to think of playing tricks? Upon my word, I shall begin to declare presently it was an optical delusion, and there never was anyone at all; but, then, my mother is the last woman in the world to imagine things, and Emily declared she heard 'something.' I don't know what to do. I declare, if nothing comes of to-night's researches, I'll bundle the two off to Brighton to-morrow, and put this house under some ancient caretaker, who'll sleep too soundly to be afraid of ghosts."

Kenneth was getting sleepy himself, or, rather, exhausted. Sleepy means, generally, a pleasant inclination to sleep, but there is another feeling often called by the same name, which is anything but pleasant, and quite a different thing from that wholesome desire to sleep we often feel after fatigue.

Who among us, except, perhaps, the very young, has not felt that jaded, worn-out sensation, when we feel as if we had come to the end of our tether, and could undertake no more?—when all we do requires such an increasing effort we long to desist. It is not sleep that haunts our eyes; but an intense desire to end the strain laid upon us, and let the reaction come. Nature is worn out, mind and body need repose, and if we can but relax the pressure we shall sink first into a state of inaction, when we make no effort,

lift no finger, give no sign of wakefulness, and yet are as powerfully conscious of all that goes on as we were at noon. It is not panic, it is not pleasure, this strange transitory state, but the penalty nature demands for the over strain and extra fatigue we have loaded on her. If undisturbed it passes slowly into sleep; but in the first stages it is far more like a waking trance than slumber.

Into this state fell Kenneth. He was not unconscious; he knew where he was, and why he was there; but he had ceased his efforts to elucidate the mystery. He had felt his own laden brain would snap if he required more thought at its hands, and he threw himself in an arm-chair—and waited.

Truly he had gone through enough that day! He had discovered his own secret and realized he loved a girl whose father had perhaps murdered his mother's husband. This and all it involved was agony enough; but more had been heaped on Kenneth. He had had to meet the beautiful heiress the world thought his future bride. He had had to be polite to her, to promise his favourite relation he would "think seriously" of the marriage. From that he came to his mother's, to find her well-nigh bereft of reason by sudden fear, and the fear so inseparably connected with his only sorrow.

He was young and healthy, but he had gone through enough to try the strongest nerves. It was hardly wonderful he lay as one worn out, that the effort to think had almost ceased, and he was nigh passing from a waking trance to slumber—well nigh passing, but not passed. A slight noise, so slight it would have been unnoticed by ears less painfully acute, it roused Kenneth from the sleepiness stealing over him. He started to his feet, conscious of all he had been hearing from Emily Taylor, and like her on the evening when poor Mrs. Marks's fears began, conscious of one thing more—that he was not alone!

(To be continued.)



[THREE IS HE ARMED THAT HATH HIS QUARREL JUST.]

NOVELETTE.]

MY LADY JEAN.

—:0:—

CHAPTER I.

"My marriage was an utter mistake. Maurice, though I would not confess it to any but you. You asked for the reason of my absence from England for five years—you have it. My wife is 'of the people'; I married her from a West-end show-room."

"You must have been mad. For my own part I don't believe in unequal marriages."

"Neither did I, even when I made Jean Lady Greatorex; only I was wildly in love with her, and she would listen to nothing I had to say until I had spoken first to her aunt, a horrid old woman called Miss Walters. Between them they fairly made me marry my wife. The aunt would not allow my visits until I gave my word I intended honourably by Jean."

"They acted discreetly," said Maurice Ormsby. "A flirtation with a man of your rank would have been social degradation to the girl."

"Social degradation!" my lord cried, scornfully; "are the people capable of that? Their sensibilities are less keen than ours, their natures coarser. Miss Walters and Jean were only very artful women, although you have generously termed them discreet. I've kept from England as long as I could, and now we are here, I am ashamed to meet old friends, and dread the time when I must parry enquiries concerning 'my lady's' birth and relations. I would willingly give her half my fortune to leave me and hide herself away for ever."

"Is she so very dreadful?" asked Maurice, with an air of commiseration."

"As regards her antecedents, yes; she herself is too wise to give me any ground for

complaint. Having won a position she means to keep it," disgustedly.

"Of course all your discomfort is of your own working," the other remarked, somewhat coldly, "and it is scarcely fair to lay the onus of your folly on Lady Greatorex. Having married her it is your duty to do your best with and for her; I cannot blind myself to what is right, although I pity your distress. I have formed a sort of idea as to 'my lady's' appearance. Is it correct? Very pretty in a commonplace style, with manners that scarcely escape being vulgar; with language that grates upon a refined ear, and a love of the aspirate in curious places."

"You shall see for yourself," my lord answered, and summoned "my lady" to the smoking-room, although Maurice Ormsby protested against it as doing the lady an indignity.

"Pooh!" said Frederick Greatorex; "Jean won't mind," and they waited in silence for "my lady" to appear.

There was the soft sweep of a woman's skirts outside, and then the door was opened, and Maurice Ormsby, when he saw a perfect vision of feminine loveliness, thought the message had miscarried, and this could not be his friend's wife.

Who could feel ashamed of such a woman if her manners and speech corresponded with her beauty? She was tall, with a head proudly upborne, and her face was the loveliest Maurice had ever seen, and surrounded by a halo of golden-brown hair, the heavy coils of which seemed almost too massive for the small head; her complexion was very fair, and her eyes deep violet, shadowed by long, dark lashes, and in their wonderful depths there was a look of suppressed anguish, of patient endurance. She was dressed in white silk and violet velvet, with a heavy train of the latter, but she wore no jewels, and her dress was high at the throat, and had elbow sleeves.

When Maurice saw her, his first feeling was of unbounded admiration and wonder; his next was that of pity, for the lady advancing said, in low, almost pleading tones,—

"You sent for me, Frederick," and through her voice there ran a tremor as of tears but hardly suppressed.

With scant ceremony my lord answered,—

"This is my friend, Maurice Ormsby—Lady Greatorex."

My lady bowed, but did not extend her white hand to Maurice, neither did she say any word of welcome, and but for the shadow on her face he would have thought her a beautiful statue, a lovely, stupid woman.

"I am very glad to meet you," the young man said; "Fred and I have so long been friends that I take an interest in all his doings—we once were like brothers."

Perhaps my lady did not consider this much of a recommendation, for her face grew a shade colder as she answered, courteously,—

"Being so old a friend you will find us always glad to see you."

The tone was refined and gentle, and Maurice was unwilling to believe that Fred's discomfort arose from any petulance or passion on his wife's part; he began to feel sore against his old friend, and wonder why he had so deteriorated. Fred's voice broke in upon his reverie.

"We will join you presently, Jean. By the way, I hope you did not keep dinner waiting for me?"

"I did until eight; then I concluded you had dined, or were dining at the club, and so had it served up."

"Rather lonely for you, but you like solitude," and with a look she understood her lord dismissed her.

"Well," he said, questioningly to Maurice, almost before the door had closed upon her, "you have seen her?"

"Yes, and maintain that if she is as good

as she is beautiful and refined you should be a happy man!"

"Probably that will be the opinion of most of my male friends; but I have learned to prize birth above beauty—like a fool I have learned it too late!"

"Does birth rank before goodness with you too?" questioned Maurice, somewhat cynically.

"Oh, goodness is a negative virtue; folks are only good who have no temptation to evil."

"That is an extremely nice idea!" Maurice said, knocking the ashes off his cigar. "Look here, Fred, I said! I didn't believe in unequal marriages; neither do I—and for several very good reasons. One is, that the woman is usually pretty and vulgar, and continually disgusts her husband and makes her children ashamed to call her mother. On the other hand, she is good, refined, and loving, but her husband wears of her, regards his so-called *mesalliance*, and reminds her frequently of the low estate from which he raised her; hence comes heartburning and ill-temper; and longing on the wife's part for possession of the world and leave her husband free. It is best for a woman to marry in her own rank."

"There I agree with you. Confound it! why isn't there a law to prevent patricians intermarrying with plebeians?"

"The patricians may please themselves in their choice of wives; and you seem to forget that almost all the genius the world boasts has come from the middle class—and the beauty too."

Lord Frederick yawned; his friend had grown beyond his comprehension, and wearied him.

"Let us join Jean," he said, "she shall sing to us," with an odious air of proprietorship.

"Upon my word, Fred, you talk like a slave-owner!" saying which Maurice followed his host into the drawing-room, where "my lady" was sitting before a bright fire, shading her face with a screen of Indian workmanship.

Maurice saw at a glance that her unoccupied hand lay clasped upon her knee, and that the shadow in her eyes had darkened. But she smiled faintly as she looked towards her husband, and moved her skirts to leave his passage to the fire free; he took up his position on the fleecy white rug, and said, with that intolerable air of command that grated upon Maurice Ormsby's keener sensibilities,—

"Sing to us, Jean."

The young man watched for some covert sign of rebellion but saw none, although "my lady" had the bearing of a very proud woman.

She laid aside her screen and crossed to the open piano, and struck a few low, soft chords.

The song she sang was composed by a Mayfair musician, the words were by Lewis Morris, and Ormsby listened with a thrill of pleasure, for her voice was very beautiful, although not powerful, and was carefully cultivated.

"Only a woman's hair,
A fair lock severed and dead;
But where is the maiden—
Where that delicate head?

Perhaps she is rich and fair.
Perhaps she is poor and worn;
And 'twere better that one somewhere
Had never been born.

And the careless hand that threw
That faded tress away.
Ah! the false heart that once seemed true,
Ah! love flung away."

My lord shrugged his shoulders.

"I wish you would not dabble so much in tragic sentiment, Jean. Sing a livelier song."

My lady's face flushed slightly, but she obeyed in an almost mechanical way which was fast becoming a habit, and sang "Thady O'Flann," and "That rogue Riley."

Then Maurice thanked her cordially, but said he could not suffer her to fatigue herself to amuse him, and she looked relieved. It

seemed to him she was little used to consideration, for his courteous words brought an expression of gratitude into the wonderful violet eyes, and the low voice trembled as she said,—

"She was not very tired," and he saw her glance deprecatingly at Frederick.

At this moment a youth of nineteen was announced; he stood blushing and confused in the doorway until "my lord" hastened forward and grasped his hand warmly.

"Why, Oliver, lad, I scarcely recognised you! When I left England you were in Moon jackets and now you sport a monocle! I didn't expect to see you for some days!"

"Oh, I was in town and only just heard of your arrival, so came up at once. I haven't forgotten your generous tips, Fred," laughing and looking very ingenuous. Then his eyes met "my lady's," and he blushed again.

Frederick at once introduced them.

"This is Oliver Greatorex, my cousin and his bride; this is my wife," and his tone changed as he spoke the last four words. "Do you know Ormsby?"

"Yes."

"Oh, well, there is no need for any further familiarity!"

Young Oliver looked at his cousin's wife with honest, boyish admiration, and after a little hesitation sat down beside her, leaving the two women to their own devices.

"I am glad to know you, cousin!" he said, frankly. "I've been curious to see you ever since I heard Fred was married, and sometimes I thought he would never return. Why did he stay away so long?"

My lady grew pale, but said quietly,—

"He is very fond of travelling."

"Have I said anything stupid?" Oliver asked, distressedly. "You look hurt."

"You have very keen eyes," she answered, smiling. "If you are to be my frequent visitor—and I hope you are—I must keep strict watch and ward over my features. No, you did not hurt me, only you reminded me that while Frederick has many friends to welcome him back I have none; that is sad."

"Then it was for your sake he kept away?" with boyish persistency.

"Yes, for my sake," and the shadow deepened in the lovely, sad eyes. Suddenly she went a little towards the lad. "Oliver, did your guardian never tell you my origin?"

"He said—he said—forgive me, cousin—that Fred had married beneath him. I think that is all anyone knows of you. You are not angry with me for speaking the truth?"

"Oh, no!" quietly. "I am going to tell you who I was, and then if you choose you shall wash your hands of your relation by marriage. Your cousin took me from a West-end show-room and made me his wife, but had I known the misery such an alliance would work for him I would not have married him. When we go into society—as we must—some of the women will recognise me, and probably make Frederick suffer through me."

"There you are wrong," Oliver said, impetuously, "all will acknowledge you are a lady. Perhaps—perhaps your people were of good birth?"

She smiled.

"Disabuse your mind of that notion; my father was a small grocer; before her marriage my mother was a drapers' assistant."

"Jean is proud of her connections," Frederick broke in, sarcastically. "Finish your story—Oliver is interested."

My lady's eyes sought his appealingly, but meeting nothing but coldness there, she said, with a certain sweet dignity,—

"My parents died when I was young, and my aunt, Miss Walters, maintained me until I was old enough to earn my own bread. I suppose I have shocked you, Oliver, and Mr. Ormsby too, but at least you will never be able to accuse me of deceit," and the faintest imaginable ring of defiance was in her tone,

"although you may possibly wash your hands

of me, and inform your lady friends they must not receive me."

Oliver made an indignant protest, but Maurice said gravely,—

"I think some person has imbued you with groundless distrust of our order. My dear Lady Greatorex, to see you is to acknowledge you as one of us, and every wife is lifted by her marriage to her husband's level. You will adorn your position."

Her sweet, prond mouth grew gentle as she spoke, and impulsively she gave him one slender white hand.

"Oh, thank you, thank you! Your words do me good. I have been afraid for Frederick, lest I should make him ashamed of me," and Frederick sat in silence.

"How many times am I to express my thanks of course?"

"My lady" drew her hand from Ormsby's, and sat down toying with her screen, and young Oliver's heart was hot against his cousin when he saw the tears rise to the violet eyes, and knew that only Jean's habit of strong self-control preventing their falling.

Neither he nor Maurice were inclined to stay longer, and after making their adieu they went out together into the chilly night.

"Frederick has changed for the worse," he had said to his silent companion. "How brutal he is to his wife!"

"Poor soul! Heaven only knows what he makes her suffer. But you, Greatorex, must not interfere between them; remember no good is ever done by mediation between man and wife—or very rarely. Once as it may seem, neither you nor I can stir a finger on her behalf, and women only must be her comforters," his dark, strong face looked very stern in the yellow lamp-light. "If you would be her friend you must enlist the sympathy of some good woman, who will stand by her in any time of need."

They parted at the corner of the street, and Maurice went on alone to his bachelor chambers, thinking scornfully of my lord, and pitifully of his beautiful, unhappy, unloved wife. The following evening he dined at the Honourable Wilfred Munro's, and took the daughter of the house into dinner; she turned the conversation immediately upon the latest arrivals in town.

"I believe you were the greatest friend Lord Greatorex had before he left the country?" interrogatively.

"Perhaps I was," diplomatically, not knowing to what Miss Munro's questions might lead. She was not a favourite of his, despite her beautiful face, blue eyes, and yellow hair.

"Then of course you rushed to meet him? I quite picture you posing as Jonathan to his David. Did you see his wife?"

"Yes," tersely.

"And is she beautiful?" with an arch glance into his sombre eyes.

"Very; the most beautiful woman I have ever seen—with the exception of Miss Munro," he added, as an after-thought, and bowed low to her.

"I have heard she is a very low-born woman," dropping her voice. "I think it must be so as the marriage was so very secret, and Lord Greatorex has absented himself from England so long. I suppose he is ashamed of her."

"You would be less inclined to such a position had you seen Lady Greatorex and heard her speak."

Valentine Munro flushed slightly at the tacit rebuke his voice conveyed.

"Is she such a paragon?"

"I did not say that; but I maintain that she is a perfect lady."

"And is the match a happy one? For my own part, I fail to believe it can be."

"That is scarcely charitable; and I consider your conclusion premature," coldly.

"She is fortunate to have won you for a champion and friend!" a trifle viciously.

"So far as I can see she does not need a champion, and I should not presume to call

myself her friend, as I saw her for the first time last evening, and then for the space of half-an-hour or so."

"But first impressions are almost invariably lasting," Valentine said, insinuatingly, "and Lady Greatorex has evidently impressed you very favourably. With all my heart I congratulate her. She is a lucky woman who can boast having won Mr. Ormsby's esteem or friendship."

"Thank you, Miss Munro. May I ask why?"

"Because you are generally supposed to be the enemy of the fair sex."

"The supposition wrongs me," coolly; "no man with the least claim to manliness is that."

The young lady looked at him curiously.

"You baffle me," she said naïvely. "I wonder what you are thinking now. Your face is a perfect blank."

"As is my mind; the latter is waiting to receive and retain any ideas you may be good enough to cast to me," smiling then, but she noticed that the sombre eyes did not smile with the mouth.

"Do you know," she said, bent upon flattering him, "papa calls you Bayard?"

"I'm greatly obliged to him, although I protest against figuring as a bundle of perfections. In such a case I should beg to be translated to another and better sphere."

"Indeed. We could not spare you," laughing softly; "you are the salt that savours all our gatherings. Only to be near you makes me glow with conscious respectability."

"You make me believe I must be a bit 'priggish,'" Maurice said, smiling into her blue eyes, "but I am very grateful to you for your high opinion," and shortly afterwards the ladies rose and adjourned to the drawing-room, greatly to Ormsby's satisfaction. He took very little part in the conversation that followed, for his thoughts were busy with Valentine Munro and Lady Jean.

"I wonder why she is so curious as to my lady's antecedents?" so ran his musing. "She is not a woman to do another a friendly turn; and, if I remember rightly, there used to be a rather warmer feeling than friendship warranted between herself and Frederick years ago. She is a clever woman and subtle, too, and if offended might work incalculable harm. She was gracious to me this evening because she had an end in view. What can that end be?"

Anxious to solve this question he joined Valentine directly he entered the drawing-room, but she was too astute to think admiration of her charms impelled him to this course. She was beautiful, but long ago she had been told Maurice Ormsby had said, "If there were no other woman in the world I would not marry Valentine Munro." She had not forgiven him for that unlucky speech, although she invariably assumed her sweetest smile and gentlest manner when he was near. She had passed through nine seasons, and now at twenty-seven looked scarcely older than she did at twenty, and each year seemed to have added something to her blonde beauty. She had striven her best to secure an eligible *parti*, but, somehow, men were very rarely willing to go beyond the borders of a mild flirtation with her; her poverty was well-known and her extravagance. It had been rumoured, too, that Miss Munro was not a pleasant element in the home circle, so she remained single. She had lately grown less ambitious, would scarcely have said no to a wealthy commoner, because her chances were getting desperately few. Once she had hoped to become Lady Greatorex, but his lordship had suddenly grown distant in his manner, and while she wondered at the change in him there came the news of his marriage with a girl whom nobody knew.

The Munro household suffered keenly from Valentine's disappointment, and the servants were heard to declare that "Miss Munro was a perfect friend."

All these things flashed upon Maurice as

he sat talking with her, and he determined in his mind that Valentine's curiosity was the outcome of a long-sleeping resentment. "She does not mean fairly to Lady Jean." Then came another thought, "She must have some influential woman friend. Her Grace is that woman." His friend's wife interested him, appealed to all his manly feelings, and curiously enough he felt, even in that early hour, that life was going to be very dark with her, and he wanted to spare her further trouble if he could do so without her knowledge.

So early the next day he paid a visit to his lady godmother, the Duchess of Etherington. She was sitting alone at breakfast, for she was a widow and childless, and her companion was away at the time; and she looked up at Maurice as he entered with a smile of pleasure.

"What a good boy you are!" she said, "to take pity on my loneliness; you must break fast with me."

"I have breakfasted already, thanks; and I was casting about in my mind what excuse I could give for my very early visit."

The lady said reproachfully, "What need for an excuse! You should know I am always glad to have you with me," passing him a cup of coffee, and regarding him with almost maternal affection. Folks did say her Grace had loved Ormsby's father vainly; certain it was she lavished very great love upon his son, and had taught him to call her aunt from his very early days. She was a woman of noble presence, and wore her silver-streaked abundant hair under a pretty lace cap, making no pretence to fewer years than she had known. She was proud and honourable—of an old and honourable family, which boasted that no shadow of shame had ever rested on its name. There was not a man or woman in her set that did not esteem and defer to her; so that Maurice felt if her sympathy was once enlisted in Jean's behalf things might run smoothly enough unless some unforeseen event changed the current of popular opinion.

"How grave you look, Maurice? Are you in any trouble, and am I to be your confessor?"

"I came to beg a favour of you, dear aunt; and I am not a very good mendicant. Of course you have heard that Greatorex is back?"

"Yes," wondering at his apparent irrelevancy; "is his wife presentable?"

"It is of her I came to speak. She is the loveliest creature you can imagine, and her manners would reflect no discredit even on your training. I want you to be good to her."

Her Grace looked grave. "Why do you take such an unusual interest in her?"

"Because she is very unhappy—she has not said so much to me—but Greatorex treats her brutally, and twists her openly with her low birth. Upon my word, aunt, I could have struck him, and I am quite sure Oliver felt the same."

"I cannot interfere between husband and wife," quickly; "you would not wish that?"

"Certainly not. I only want you to call upon her, give her a friendly hand, let her make her *début* here. All the world will follow in your lead, and her future welcome be ensured."

The Duchess did not care for the mission. She was afraid Jean would disappoint her, and she had old-world prejudices concerning marriages; but she was a good and a kind woman, so she promised to do as Maurice wished, and he left, well content with his success.

Later on that morning her carriage might have been seen waiting at Lord Greatorex's door; and the duchess had been conducted to a reception-room. Jean did not linger on her way from her boudoir, but went with quiet grace and dignity to meet her visitor. She was wearing a plain morning dress that displayed to advantage her superb figure. Her Grace rose to meet her, locked into the sweet, proud face and wonderful violet eyes, and her own grew soft. "My dear," she said simply, "I wanted to be your very first visitor, and Maurice has spoken so highly of you that I shall be glad to be your friend."

The lovely face flushed. "Your Grace is very kind," and from her voice the lady guessed kindness was not her everyday food; "and in Lord Greatorex's name and my own I thank you."

"Maurice probably told you of the tie that unites us?" pausing for an answer to her half-question.

"No; I saw Mr. Ormsby but for a short time, and our conversation was rather general than personal."

"Where did she attain this refinement of speech and manner?" wondered the Duchess; but she chatted of indifferent things until she rose to go; then she invited Jean to drive with her in the *Row* the following day; and Jean, keenly alive to the duties of her position, gladly promised. Then her Grace drove away to visit other friends and acquaintances, to all of whom she expatiated largely on the beauty and grace of Lady Greatorex.

The following week she gave a dinner, and all were invited who had not yet seen the lovely stranger.

Maurice looked forward hopefully to that evening because he thought if Frederick saw his wife fated and admired, heard himself envied, he would forget his terrible bugbear, and be to her as in the early days of their marriage. Valentine Munro, looking lovely in blue tulle, was there, anxious to meet her old rival, feeling bitter at heart against her, but masking her envy and hate with pretty smiles and light words. At length husband and wife were announced, and there was an ill-suppressed buzz of admiration as Jean entered, leaning on Frederick's arm.

He looked almost morose, but few thought of him in that first moment; she riveted all eyes by her beauty. She wore a black Spanish lace dress unrelieved by any colour save at her bosom, where nestled a cluster of *La France* roses, whilst the Greatorex diamonds flashed round her white throat and wrists, and in her lovely hair, throwing out little scintillations of wonderful liquid light as she moved. The Duchess moved towards her, greeted her with delicate *empressement*, and Maurice saw with pleasure that she would be a success. He was not so well pleased, however, when he found that Frederick was beside Valentine Munro, ready to take her down, whilst Lady Jean fell to his own share.

"Now, what is that woman's scheme, for I'm certain she has one. She never yet was amiable without a motive?"

He wished he could hear Valentine's lowly, spoken words; after all, they were apparently simple, but they were spiced with many a half-pleading or wholly sympathetic glance from the forget-me-not blue eyes.

Her companion was at first embarrassed, for in the days that had gone for ever he had not behaved quite well to her; but she speedily assured him of her friendliness, and chatted as if he had never been a very important figure in her life.

She glanced across at Jean, talking quietly to Maurice.

"Your wife is very beautiful!" she said, with greater generosity than was usual with her.

"I believe she is," he answered, in a non-appreciative tone, and not glancing towards Jean.

"You have not yet told me who she was, although I am such a very old friend?" with a pretty smile.

"Her name was Walters," tersely, almost morosely.

Valentine laughed to herself, knowing his weak point, and said with sweet unsuspicion,—

"One of the Surrey Walters?"

"No, I believe she was born at Huntingdon; and she boasts no ancestors."

"Oh! forgive me," Valentine murmured. "I am sorry to have wounded you; but from her manner and appearance, and her Grace's friendliness, I concluded her pedigree was as long as your own. Ah! it was cruel of you to hurry away without a good-bye—and we

such old friends—and never to introduce your bride to us! You had no cause to be ashamed of her!" and he winced under her words, as she intended he should. "One day you shall tell me all about your romantic marriage. I mean to cultivate Lady Greatorex—she pleases me—as she does Mr. Ormsby."

Frederick glanced towards his wife and his friend. Jean was looking more animated than usual, and both Maurice and the man on her left appeared to be interested in her conversation. She was describing graphically some scenes from her continental life, and had for a time forgotten all discomforts. Even her husband was forced reluctantly to acknowledge she was very lovely, although that loveliness had palled upon him.

He turned again to Valentine, with a feeling almost of hatred for Jean stirring in his heart.

All through his love for her he had been very selfish; he had persecuted her with attentions which she had received indignantly; he had longed for her love, but had been unwilling to pay the price she demanded. Then his passion had mastered him, and he had sought her aunt and told her he wished to marry Jean; the maiden lady then allowed his visits, and he won the girl's heart, and finally she consented to his prayer. He insisted then that the ceremony should be very quiet; even in the hour of his triumph he began to regret the step he had taken.

He carried Jean to France, from France through the adjoining countries, and in less than six months he wearied of her and broke her spirit with his coarse allusions to her former low estate, and his own unparalleled generosity and folly in making her "my lady."

Now he felt again the charm of Valentine's presence; she was so beautiful, so sympathetic.

He bent his dark head lower over that fair one, with its pretty curls.

"Miss Munro," he said, "I thought to find you some happy man's wife!"

One moment the forget-me-not eyes met his, and he thought there was a look of reprobation in them; then they were cast down, and with a little sigh she said,—

"Perhaps I am happier in my single blessedness; and," smiling faintly, "what man would marry a beggar?"

"Wealth is not the passport to Society, but birth; you have that—and—and beauty!"

She used her fan dexterously to hide an imaginary blush.

"You are pleased to flatter me."

"Upon my life, no," with greater eagerness than he had yet shown; "you are lovelier than when last I saw you!" and paused, meeting Maurice's dark, inscrutable eyes fixed on him.

All through that evening, utterly regardless of appearances, he stayed by Valentine, careless of the deepening shadows in Jean's eyes, or the angry expression of young Oliver, who was already the latter's sworn slave. To the boy "my lady" seemed like some fair saint, and he was ready to fight her battles, forgetful of Ormsby's caution. Once he found himself beside Maurice.

"Do you see what a beast Fred is making of himself?"

"I see," grimly.

"What is that woman Munro's game?"

"I don't know; I wish I did."

CHAPTER II.

My lady sat in a low chair before the fire, and Maurice Ormsby stood looking down upon her, with one elbow on the marble mantel. They had grown very real friends, for Frederick had thrown them much together, so that Jean had learned to rely on the young man's sound advice, and to feel glad of his esteem.

In her eyes the shadows had deepened, and

the delicacy of her complexion was more noticeable; the faint tinge of colour had faded from her cheeks, and, despite its grace, her manner had an air of languor new to it.

She was speaking in a low, listless voice in answer to a question Maurice had asked.

"How did I meet Lord Greatorex? Did he never tell you that? I was in the employ of Messrs. Wedder and Co., what is called a 'show-room hand'; the hours were not very long, and the salary was good. I used to 'try on mantles' for the customers, and, in fact, was a sort of lay figure.

"It was not a part of my duty to attend ladies at their own homes, but one day the assistant, whose peculiar duty it was, was ill, and the senior partner requested that I would go to Lady Melville's to take a particular order.

"I was shown into a small room, where a gentleman sat writing. He rose, and gave me a chair, and stood talking with me until Lady Melville entered. She seemed displeased, and dismissed him rather abruptly.

"The gentleman was Frederick, and after that accidental meeting he often came down to our firm, and contrived to see me. I did not live in the house, but with my aunt, who since my marriage has died; and Frederick would follow me to our lodgings and accost me, but I knew what was due to myself, and what the world would say of a friendship between a draper's assistant and a nobleman; so I maintained perfect silence towards him, until one night, flashing into anger, I told him no gentleman would so persecute a friendless girl.

"He was angry, and did not molest me again for a week or ten days, then he reappeared, and saying he knew my place of residence and intended seeing my friends on the morrow, left me. Oh! Mr. Ormsby, was I wrong then to listen to him? He had made me love him; and although at first I would not promise to be his wife because I feared to wrong him, at last I yielded to his persuasions. And now I maintain that a woman who is honest and pure, whose education has been such as to fit her for a higher rank than that in which she is born, is any man's equal—even though he is the highest peer of the realm!"

The faint pink tinged her cheeks, and her luminous eyes kindled.

"My education was what is commonly called sound English; I had, too, a smattering of music, and when we were away I said to myself, 'He shall never have cause to blush for me,' and so employed my leisure hours (soon they were very many) in attaining those accomplishments thought necessary to complete a lady's education.

"Music, drawing, languages—oh, Heaven!" breaking suddenly down, "nothing I did could teach him forgetfulness of my low origin! I don't blame him; I might have known how it would be, but women do not understand how men love—until it is too late! All that is left me now is to do my duty, 'to love, honour and obey' him, and to remember I have spoiled his life, and in that remembrance learn humility and patience!"

Her weary head drooped upon her hands, and the slow tears trickled through the jewelled fingers. Inexpressibly touched the young man said,—

"Surely, when he sees how others admire and crowd about you he will return to the old allegiance?"

"No!" she answered, "never any more!" and stopped hastily, because Valentine Munro was announced.

She entered smiling, but with a glance comprehended every detail of the scene—Ormsby's disturbed face, the tears that Jean hastily dashed away, and to herself she whispered, "I see the way to my revenge!" She did her best to ouststay Maurice, but his patience was greater than hers, and he had a word of warning for "my lady" before he left.

"You are looking very ill!" Valentine said, with great apparent sympathy. "Are you really well, dear Lady Greatorex?"

"Quite, thank you. I never am very robust in appearance; and I have been very gay lately."

"But you take your pleasures quietly, not madly and exhaustively as I do," warming her hands and smiling up at Maurice. "One forgets to remark on Mr. Ormsby's appearance; he is always so fearfully and wonderfully grave."

"Merely to enhance the brilliancy of the butterflies," he answered, smiling peculiarly; and after a lengthened visit Valentine rose to go, disgusted with her ill-success.

Scarcely had the door closed upon her than Maurice began to speak earnestly.

"Lady Greatorex, I would particularly warn you against that woman. She is as false as 'Vivien,' and she does not love you! Avoid her (not markedly) on every possible occasion. She does not mean well to you; above all, do not confide in her."

"Oh!" my lady said wearily. "I thought her kind! My path is a very difficult one!"

"I am afraid it is. But rouse yourself, and exert your influence over Frederick against her, which is great, greater far than you imagine, and not used in your behalf; the Duchess will tell you the same. If you need a *confidante*, go to her. I am your friend, but you will readily understand that even if I could receive your confidences, it would not be a wise or good thing. This charming world of ours does not allow friendship between man and woman."

"I understand," Jean said, quietly; "and I thank you for speaking so plainly. But I need no *confidante*. I cannot disclose my husband's shortcomings to any, not excepting the Duchess."

"You are right to endure in silence so long as you can," gravely; "but if your burden grows too great, go to my aunt; she has already a warm affection for you," with which words he took his leave.

Outside his face grew stern and troubled; he wanted to help this woman, he pitied her so much, but he did not see clearly how to do it; and a strange, vague feeling stirred at his heart that gave him a sense of unrest and discomfort.

Perplexed, dissatisfied with himself, he decided to call upon his godmother; and, acting on this resolve, was chagrined to find her out.

He went into the library, bidding a servant tell him when she returned. And after a long perusal of titles of the many books in the well-filled shelves, he took down Arnold's "Essays on Criticism," but his thoughts would wander away, and at last he threw the volume impatiently down, and sat thinking of all that had happened in the last three weeks—Frederick's return, his introduction to Jean, and consequent friendship—and his restlessness increased.

He thought of her beauty, her lonely distress, her loveless, empty life, and his heart ached for her. He longed to protect her, but he had no right to do that; the only thing he could do was to quietly watch over her interests, and to gain his godmother's full and perfect affection for her.

He was so buried in his thoughts that it was with a great start he found the Duchess standing beside him.

"Why, Maurice, what a very brown study you were in! I spoke twice before you heard me."

"I beg your pardon, my dear aunt," rising and giving her a chair. "Have you been home long?" noticing she had laid aside her bonnet and dolman.

"Yes, Drake told me you were here, and as the mountain did not come to Mahomet, Mahomet came to the mountain. You must have wished this interview greatly to wait for me," with a keen glance at the perplexed, dark face. "What is it, Maurice?"

"I want to talk to you about Lady Greatorex. I've been there to-day; she was alone."

The lady looked grave.

"My dear boy, I am afraid you are too constant a visitor there."

"I begin to think so too, but what am I to do? Frederick is constantly begging me 'to drop in,' and when I do so he is almost invariably away; then he asks me to escort my lady to this and that place, because he has a previous engagement. I cannot well refuse, but I don't like it. I am afraid of scandal, not for myself, you know, but for her."

"Yes; that must be considered, Maurice. There is another reason why you should not see Lady Greatorex so often. She is a very beautiful woman, and you are a young man."

"What do you mean, aunt?" his face flushing, and his voice a little shaken.

"This, my boy, that I do not consider friendship between you safe. You may get hurt!"

"What made you say that?" the trouble deepening in his eyes; then, with a sudden burst of candour, "the fact is, aunt, I have thought of such a possibility myself—to-day for the first time—and I concluded it would be well for me to draw back now before the mischief is done—gradually, so that Lady Greatorex does not immediately discover any change in me. You see," with growing confusion, "I have never flirted, never cared for any woman, and if I did learn to love I should have the plague badly."

"She is a good woman and true, and as you imply, the danger is all yours in a certain sense; but, supposing you learned to care for her in that way, and she another man's wife, you might not be able always to hide your passion. So you would compromise her name and increase her misery."

"You are right, aunt," steadily. "What a blessing it is I have you to advise me and to appeal to. I want you to supply my place—I want you to be as dear a friend to her as I find it in myself to be. For my sake, if not for hers, you will grant me this?"

"Yes, and far—far more if you choose to ask it," warmly. "I really like Lady Greatorex for her own sake. She is not a brilliant, but she is a pure and noble woman. There are very few like her."

"I know that, and I have found a great pleasure in talking with her. She is so earnest—so kindly in her estimate of all—the exact opposite of the woman of the period."

He paused, and the lady said,—

"When will you begin the new line of conduct?"

"To-day is Tuesday. To-morrow I have promised to take her to the Minnertons. Frederick is due elsewhere. Well, then, I begin on Thursday. By the way, aunt, what is your opinion of Miss Munro?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because she is continually protesting great friendship for Lady Greatorex, and she does nothing without a motive."

"That is very true, although it sounds harsh. Was there not some talk of an engagement between her and Lord Greatorex before he met his wife?"

"Yes; I have advised the latter to place no confidence in her."

The Duchess was silent for a time, then she said quietly,—

"I am due at the Minnertons too. Suppose you call for me, and together we can drive round for our mutual friend?"

"Oh, thank you! I knew I might count on your ready help, but this really exceeds my hopes."

So on Thursday Jean arrived at the Minnertons with her two friends, and the Duchess did not leave her the whole of the evening.

Men turned to look at the tall, beautiful figure of Fred's wife, and wondered why the sweet, proud face so rarely brightened into smiles—why the violet eyes wore so great a look of pain!

And whilst men admired and women envied her, her husband was pleasantly engaged in conversation with Miss Munro.

Mrs. Munro was asleep in her chair, and

"the Honourable"—by the way his title was a libel on him—was at his club, so the two, sitting in one of the deep windows talking in low tones, feared no interruption.

"How could you think I had forgotten you, Val?" Greatorex was saying, and the fair-faced woman answered with a quick look towards her mother,—

"You must not call me that."

"Why not?" he asked, impetuously. "You know I have outlived my miserable infatuation; you know I love you. Valentine! be kind to me; remember how wretched I am."

"Am I not wretched?" her face hidden in her pretty jewelled hands. "Have I ever for a moment forgotten the past? Is it not enough for you to know for your sake I am still Valentine Munro? I tell you plainly, Fred, I will not compromise myself by any flirtation with you."

"Would to Heaven I could free myself!" passionately. "Oh! my darling, think of a way in which I can rid myself of her? I swear on my honour if you will devise some plan, so soon as I am free I will marry you."

She looked up, a triumphant glitter in her forget-me-not eyes, a flush on her face.

"Can you think of nothing?" she asked, quickly. "Are you blind to your own interests?"

"I confess I can see no way out of my misery," bitterly. "She is so discreet a woman, and she loves me!"

"She is discreet, but may be made to appear otherwise, and that very easily."

"How?—how?" his breath coming fast, and in his excitement he raised his voice so that it disturbed Mrs. Munro, and she turned uneasily in her chair.

"Come into the next room," Valentine whispered, and he followed her softly, and entering closed the door. Then this woman he so blindly preferred to his own leal wife said, in very low tones,—

"My lady is seen everywhere with Mr. Ormsby!"

"By my wish!" not catching at her idea, and for a moment she was afraid to disclose her plot, but he urged passionately that she would not keep him in suspense, and she went on with deliberation.

"How is the world to know that! You and I can swear to the contrary, though it would be well for me not to appear in this. You may feign jealousy—may declare my lady's frivolity has estranged you from her—"

"Of what use would that be?"

"How stupid you are!" impatiently. "There is such a thing as the *Divorce Court*!"

For a moment even he was staggered by the revelation of so devilish a plot. Just while one might count five he felt a throb of revulsion; then it passed, and he caught the woman to him.

"Go on, Val," hoarsely. "Let me hear the whole, love! Love, you will yet be my wife!"

Yes, if she could compass it she would.

"You must throw your friend and my lady together more and more. Let them be seen together at all places, and from to-night avoid me—for a time. We must meet secretly to discuss our plans. My rôle is this. I am her friend until such a time as our plans are ripe for execution. Then I drop her, and am asked why. By sundry shrugs and lifting of the brows I imply she is not what she should be. Then will come a climax—but of that later on. Only in all things rely on me, and act by my advice!"

"I will—I will!" eagerly. "Kiss me, Val. You have never given me one caress since that night more than five years ago."

She lifted her lips to his and kissed him once, then urged him to go lest her father should return, and after he had reluctantly obeyed her, she sat down by the table and laying her face upon her arms, broke into a fit of low laughter.

"The fool!—the fool!" she said at last through her small clenched teeth, "to think I

love him or forgive his desertion! Not to see it is his wealth, his position I covet! He will find me a trifle less angelic and submissive than my lady. As for her—and her beautiful face grew dark and cruel—"as for her, she shall be sorry for the day in which she stole him from me. I shall pay off all old scores at one blow, and if he knew who planned and worked his disgrace and hers, Maurice Ormsby would wish he had never insulted me!"

It caused Jean some surprise when her friend's visits grew fewer, whilst Greatorex felt unfeignedly disgusted, and began to think that his plot would fail; but Valentine, in their secret meetings, encouraged him and instructed him how to proceed.

Acting on her advice he frequented Maurice's Club, and buttonholing him would insist on carrying him off to his home. Sometimes they found Miss Munro there, but the host was always distant to her, and she apparently almost ignored his existence, so that Jean thought Ormsby's suspicions unfounded, and was kindly and gracious to the beautiful blonde who was constantly assuring her of her great affection.

Maurice did not find it an easy matter always to refuse Fred's pressing invites, and when Jean added her pleadings to his, he not unfrequently succumbed; besides, he was sure that no good result would spring from an intimacy with Valentine, so he went again and again, and Fred saying, "You are such a steady old fellow, I can leave my wife to your care with a clear conscience," would go to his club or to keep some engagement with Valentine, whilst Maurice accompanied Jean to theatre and opera, until it began to be a usual thing for Society to couple their names—not at first in an evil or censorious spirit, because Maurice was Fred's friend, and my lady had already won golden opinions to herself, beside which Her Grace the Duchess of Etherington made much of her.

So early April came, and then Valentine thought it was high time to begin operations. Greatorex was growing impatient. Her father's creditors were more threatening, and a crash was imminent.

My lady once disposed of, her own good was secured.

She had taken every precaution to prevent failure.

She had recommended a maid to Jean, who was a creature of her own, and willing for a price to traduce her generous and gentle mistress.

Frederick, acting on her advice, had engaged an extra footman, whose duty it was to spy upon "my lady," and between man and maid there was a perfect understanding. Each was ready at a given time to swear away my lady's honour, to wreck her life for greed of gold.

Jean felt an instinctive distrust of the smooth-tongued Jenny, and nothing but her sense of justice compelled her to retain the girl. She was quick, and apparently willing; light of foot, quiet in manner; never neglected any of her duties; gave no cause even for the mildest complaint, so that when Valentine asked if Jenny suited her taste, my lady answered that she was a clever and a willing maid, but that she disliked and distrusted her.

"Poor Jenny!" murmured Valentine pitifully, "I am sorry you should think so ill of her, she is a worthy little soul; if I were happy enough to have a maid I should choose Jenny Baldwin in preference to any. Probably you don't know her story? No? Ah! that is like the girl, to keep her troubles to herself. By her own exertions she maintains her mother and a crippled sister, and finds something to spare for a brother who is left a widower with five little children."

All of which was concocted by Valentine and implicitly believed by my lady, who strove, by kindness and many a generous gift, to lighten Jenny's lot and atone for that strange sense of distrust she could not conquer.

Life was growing harder to the unhappy wife. Greatorex was now often brutal in speech and manner towards her, and began to speak jealously of Maurice, even before the servants; and once, my lady remonstrating, he half raised his hand as if to strike her. She was standing before him, but she did not wince at his gesture, nor under his dark look. She uttered no reproach, only her face was very white, and he saw a sudden flush in her beautiful eyes, as if the gentle spirit was at last aroused to anger. Then she turned and swept from the room to find refuge in her boudoir; there she flung herself upon a couch, and sobbed tearlessly, but as though her heart would break.

"Oh, Heaven! Oh, Heaven!" she moaned, "if I had but one thing to call my own, a little child to love me, and on whom I could cast my love—to save me from madness—to help me bear my bitter burden!"

Then her tears began to flow, and she lay with hidden face praying God would graciously take her to himself. A slight rustling sound made her glance quickly up, and she saw Jenny regarding her fixedly in an opposite mirror; the girl stepped hastily to her side.

"My lady is ill," she said, softly, but Jean shook her head and motioned away the sal volatile she had poured out. Then the girl spoke deprecatingly, and as if afraid of offending. "My lord has been cruel to my lady. Oh! my dear mistress, if I could bear this grief for you!"

Jean rose.

"You have forgotten yourself Jenny," she said, coldly, "do not presume so far again, and she dismissed her.

Outside the maid's face changed.

"You poor fool!" she hissed, "you have forgotten yourself! I shall remember those words to your cost, my lady!"

Jean spent the long hours alone, resolving what to do; and when the next day came and brought with it Maurice Ormsby she met him with a quietly determined face. She had been giving her maid some instructions concerning a dress, and as she passed out of the room, Jean thought she dashed a peculiar look at the man who admitted Maurice, and who was her confederate, but she did not mention her suspicions then. She motioned her visitor to a chair, and with a gentle frankness peculiar to her at once broached the subject upon which she had brooded all night.

"I am glad you have come to-day, because I have something of importance to say to you. For several days I have been trying to summon the necessary courage to do this, and until now have failed."

"Is it anything very fearful? because if so I would rather not hear it," Maurice said, smilingly.

"You will think it so," wearily. "I ought to have told you before, only—only you have been so kind a friend I could not. Mr. Ormsby, you must not come here any more!"

"Why?" sharply, and the man's heart failed him. "What objection have you to my visits?"

"Personally, none; you know that I am always glad to see you—but oh! how shall I tell you? Lord Greatorex has insulted me through you; has—has grown jealous of our friendship. Last night he spoke words I cannot forget, and it is best we should meet no more save as casual acquaintances." She paused, as if she hoped he would speak, but he only stood looking down at her with white, angry, tortured face, and eyes that could not see her beauty.

She spoke again, and her voice was full of tears.

"Oh! I have hurt you cruelly; but what could I do? It is my duty to please him still—if I can—if I can!"

"Yes," he said, mechanically, "it is your duty."

"You—you are not very angry with me?"

"No," his face was distorted and his voice

hoarse, and until now he had spoken with a great effort, but suddenly his words came so fiercely and fast that they were huddled and almost unintelligible.

"For what does Frederick Greatorex take me? Am I a villain that I should wrong another man so sorely, and that man once my friend? Did he not thrust me upon you whether I would or no, and without consulting your wishes? Have I not been his deputy, his lacquey? Have I not stood in the gap so that the world might not know his miserable madness? Have I ever spoken one word to you he and all might not hear. Because I saw you desolate, wretched, I have stood by you, trying to make your life a little better, a little happier!"

"I know, I know!" she sobbed. "Oh! do not take this so sorely to heart; remember that he spoke madly, that he could not mean what he said. And, oh! do not forget my gratitude—my undying gratitude. Perhaps when he knows how wrong, how unfounded his suspicions are, he will be sorry and beg your forgiveness."

He laughed harshly; then suddenly said, in an altered tone, —

"He will not do that. He wishes to drive away your only friend—no, not your only friend; I had forgotten my godmother; but he wants to leave you lonely that so, being miserable, you may agree to anything he demands of you. And Valentine Munro is the woman who moves him to this."

"Oh, no, no! Indeed, you wrong her. She is most kind; most good to me!"

"Ah! who would connect malice and evil with that pretty, fair face, those innocent eyes?" bitterly. "Lady Greatorex, I will obey you implicitly in all things; I will not come here again unless he asks me, which is improbable; but I shall not forget you or cease to be your friend. I am going at once, because I feel this interview must be extremely painful to you. Shall you tell him what you have done?"

"Certainly; I have no secrets from my husband!" tremulously.

Then the man put out his hand.

"Good-bye!" he said. "If ever you are in sore need send for me."

Her tears fell fast as she said good-bye, and her lovely, weary eyes followed his slowly retreating figure.

With his hand upon the door he turned to look at her.

"Heaven help you!" he said, and went out. He thought he heard the faint echo of steps, but he saw no one, and fancied himself mistaken. Yet Jenny had only stolen from the door to a little alcove, where she hid until he left the house. Then she sallied out with a smiling face,—

"With a little cunning we shall win our wages!" she thought. And hearing Jean's bell hastened to answer it.

"My lady rang?" she said, demurely, and glanced at her mistress through lowered lashes.

"Yes; I wish to know what there is between you and Greaves?"

"My lady!" in mild expostulation, "I do not understand."

"Indeed, you do," Jean said, calmly; "there is some secret telegraphy between you, and it concerns me!"

"Oh, my lady! how have we deserved this distrust?" Jenny asked, her handkerchief to her eyes. "Oh! forgive me, forgive me! But he and I—are—are engaged to be married. There is nothing else between us. And we say nothing of it because we shall have to wait so long."

"I wish I could believe you," my lady said, coldly. "In my heart I know you for a spy, but I cannot prove it. One day perhaps I shall; then you know what in self-defence I shall do. You can go."

And the girl went out sobbing and protesting, whilst Jean lay back pale and worn with the morning's event and the past night's agony.

Ah! she was too open an enemy. She

could not meet subtlety with subtlety, cunning with cunning. Her weapons were purity and honesty, which, pitted against hate, malice and craft, are too often weak opponents.

Meanwhile Maurice, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, his face very dark, his brow lowering, made his way to his godmother's. When she saw him she knew something had gone very wrong, and like a wise woman she waited for him to speak.

He sat down, moodily, then he said,—

"I'm think of going away, aunt!"

"Why?" she questioned, quietly; "the season is not nearly over!"

He answered bitterly that the season had no charms for him. The sooner he left town the happier he should be. Then, in a hoarse voice and with hurried words, he told the story that Jean had told him. And as she listened the gentle lady's face flushed, and her usually quiet eyes flashed indignantly.

"So," she said, when he had finished, "to use an old adage, the 'devil has shown his claws!' Ah, that poor girl! But I have feared this for some time. Why has he thrown you so much together if not for some vile motive? But what that motive is is hard to guess."

"Valentine Munro is at the bottom of this," Maurice said, vehemently, interrupting her.

"There I think you are unjust. She is not even on friendly terms with Greatorex!"

"Apparently," he said sharply. "Wait and see, and subsequent events will prove that I am right, you wrong. For myself, I don't care; but for her, that poor girl! almost friendless and utterly at his mercy, without an idea how to defend herself against the man she is wretched enough to call husband. By Heaven! it is too cruel—it makes a fellow a coward only to think of it!"

His godmother touched his arm, "Maurice," she said, pitifully, "I think you are right; you must go away."

His dark head drooped, and his face flushed. "Have I betrayed myself, aunt?" he asked.

"To me? Yes!"

He rose.

"It is true; but I never realised it until this morning, and, thank Heaven, she does not know. I have never, by word or glance, told her what she is to me. I have been her friend, but not more, and now I must leave her unprotected, alone!"

"No, Maurice; I will not forsake her. She must be a good woman who could win your love!"

He smiled sadly, then said,—

"You do me too much honour, aunt. After all, I think I shall remain in town for a few weeks longer. I am confident some crisis is impending, and she may need a man's help. But you need not fear; I shall not try to see her, because, having learned my weakness, I know how far I may go in safety—and when by chance we meet I shall play my part discreetly. I shall not even seek a quarrel with Greatorex, though it would give me greatest satisfaction to punish him as he deserves. To think that thing was ever my friend!" bitterly; then his thoughts turned again to Jean. "When will you go to her?" "Now; wait here until I return."

And far into the day he sat, thinking of all that had passed in the previous ten weeks, wondering how he had been so long learning his own secret; pondering what Jean would feel and say could she know it, and in bitterness of spirit recalling and confirming what a modern poet has well written:—

"O love, that never pardons,
O love, more pitiless than death,
His strife is vain who would express,
Thy sweets, without thy bitterness!"

CHAPTER III.

VALENTINE'S visits to my lady began to be like angels' visits, very rare things. She took

care to impress this upon all her friends and acquaintances, affected utter ignorance of Jean's movements, and when speaking of her sighed, shrugged her shoulders and smiled with odious significance, so that soon her lady friends agreed there was something mysterious, and not quite right about "my lady." Then Miss Munro's visits altogether ceased, and Jean felt sadly all her friends were leaving her, and wondered in what manner she had offended Valentine. She withdrew a little from society, and tried to occupy herself pleasantly at home! When she appeared in public it was usually with the duchess or young Oliver, who swore by his cousin's wife.

One night all the fashionable world was present at a dinner given by a wealthy, handsome widow. Jean had been invited, but declined; Valentine, however, was there, pretty, suave, and smiling, with a gleam of triumph in her eyes, for to-night she was going to strike Jean a great blow, and she felt convinced it would tell; that blow would only be the forerunner of others and worse ones. In the drawing-room, before the advent of the gentlemen, she seated herself beside an old woman, who, despite her ugliness and malicious tongue, had once been a leader of fashion.

There was no one too innocent for Lady Thurley to attack, no one so pure that might not fear her virulence, and Valentine knew by speaking slightly of Jean to the old harridan, she would make society ring with the fact that "my lady" was far from blameless in her life. Very cleverly she led Lady Thurley to speak of her; and then, with lowered lids and mournful intonation, said she did not visit her any longer, and, pausing, sighed.

The old woman eagerly caught at her words, her tone, and begged to know why the friendship between "her dear Miss Munro and Lady Greatorex no longer existed," and under promise of secrecy, Valentine said that she could not countenance my lady's monstrous flirtation with Mr. Ormsby; that she believed the coldness between husband and wife to result from the latter's partiality for the husband's friend.

"But," she added, "you will keep this secret inviolate; I would not betray Lady Greatorex or in any way hurt her."

Of course, her companion renewed her protestations of silence, and Valentine smiled to think how soon they would be forgotten or lightly regarded. When the gentlemen joined the ladies she saw with satisfaction that Lady Thurley moved from one to another dowager, talking in an animated way, and by the uplifting of eyes and hands she knew the story was being circulated with many additions to add to its flavour. By the close of that evening very many knew that Lord and Lady Greatorex were on bad terms; that the rupture had been caused by my lady's audacious flirtation with Maurice Ormsby, who had been forbidden the house by the injured husband Alas! for Jean's fair name! Alas! for her peace!

The following day the Duchess of Hetherington heard the story, and waxed angry over it, denied it emphatically, but thought sadly,

"This is the first threatening of the storm. Heaven help that poor girl!"

She would have gone to Jean, but a somewhat severe indisposition confined her to her room, and she had to be content with sending kindly messages; but she could not find it in her heart to tell her how her fair fame was being done to death by cruel tongues, so Jean lived a few days longer in ignorance of all.

She was looking very pale and ill; she missed Ormsby's kindness and Valentine's sprightly talk, and was unfeignedly glad when one morning Oliver burst into the room.

"Where is Fred?" he asked, after the usual greetings had passed.

"Out of town; he has gone to Walthamstow with Colonel Milburn."

"Then, of course your time is your own!" joyfully; "and I want you to go with me to the Horticultural Fête. It will be quite a swell affair, and you are to look your best, cousin Jean. Oh! don't say no. I will not accept a refusal!" and he won his way by his impetuosity.

When they were well out, he turned to look at his companion.

"By Jove! cousin, how beautiful you are to-day, and how prettily you are dressed! All the fellows will be envying me!" with boyish pride.

She smiled sadly. Oliver thought, with a pang, he had never heard her laugh, and his heart throbbed with passionate indignation of his cousin's callousness. But they were at the gates, and here they came upon Maurice alone.

He seemed pleased to see them, and entered with them. Jean remarked gravely that he was looking worn and ill; he answered, carelessly, that town did not suit him, and he was leaving it in the course of a week.

At that moment they met a lady acquaintance, and Jean bowed, the men lifted their hats, but the lady looked away, and Maurice felt a sudden inexplicable dread come upon him.

He glanced at Jean; she said quietly and innocently,

"Poor Mrs. Singrove! How terribly short her sight is!" but he knew the cut was intentional.

They entered the tents, and some of their acquaintances fell back and hastily left as they entered; others ignored them, and when he looked at Jean again her face was very white. By a sign he commanded silence of Oliver, and they passed into the grounds once more.

Here they met Valentine and a man who affected her society; Jean bowed, and tried to smile; Miss Munro looked her through, as it were, and turned away with no sign of recognition. My lady, trembling and faint, caught at Oliver's arm, but it was to Maurice she spoke,—

"What does it mean?" she asked, and at the anguish in her voice her companions were afraid. "Oh, tell me!" she implored, "why will none of them see me, or exchange a word with me? What have I done?"

"There is some vile conspiracy against you," Maurice said, and longed to catch her to him. This was the most terrible hour of his life, for in her unmerited pain and disgrace he could give her no comfort, and dared not, must not, offer her his love. She stood a moment, white and stricken, then she wailed, rather than said,—

"Take me home. I—I think I have got my death-blow!"

She swayed a little towards Oliver, and he did his best to support her. Then he whispered,—

"Don't break down, dear cousin, it will all come right; Fred will teach them a lesson—and we will stand by you to the end."

She did not seem to hear him; she only reiterated,—

"Take me home! take me home!"

They drew her through the gaily-dressed crowds. She saw no one; but they heard and saw all that passed. Maurice walked with head erect and dark, stern face. In that hour he longed most for revenge. But Oliver looked from right to left, his young cheeks crimson, his lips quivering. On their way they passed Valentine again, and the lad left his companions a moment, to say in a loud tone,—

"I fancy, Miss Munro, you can explain all this. If it is you who have wronged Lady Greatorex, you may wish you had never been born!"

It did Jean no good, because those who heard said,—

"Has she bewitched that boy too?"

Outside the gates Maurice called a cab, and putting my lady in, bade Oliver follow her. Then he strode away in an opposite direction.

His first thought was to find Greatorex. There was murder in his heart then, and he would have rejoiced to see his one time friend stretched dead at his feet.

He walked on and on, heedless of where he went, thinking, and thinking vainly, what help could reach Jean; and then there came a sense of thankfulness that he had so well hidden his love and his pain from her, because she could still trust him, confide in him, and, if need were, apply to him for aid.

Oliver assisted my lady from the cab, and merely telling Greaves she had been taken suddenly ill, led her to the breakfast-room and made her lie down upon a couch.

"Don't let any one come to me," she said, then hid her face in the cushions, and lay like one dead.

The lad's heart was too full for much speech so he only said, in a choked voice,—

"Don't break down, dear cousin; if no one else will see you righted I will."

She signed that she heard him, and he knelt down beside her, and kissed her hand; then he attempted to speak again,—

"You've been so good to me—a sort of mother to me! Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven!—I'm a fool—but—but—" and could say no more, and when Jean turned her poor white face upon him she saw his blue-grey eyes were full of tears, and that he wore an Englishman's expression of shame at being detected. Her weary voice broke the sudden stillness,—

"Don't vex yourself about me, Oliver. My trouble must not be yours."

"Oh," he cried, with flushed face and clenched hands, "If I could crush them all in one grip! His tones were hoarse and tremulous with rage. Suddenly he sprang up, "I'm going to look for Ormsby; perhaps I shall find him at his godmother's; if I do I will bring him back, and we will talk this over, and—

"No, no; you must not bring him here. Frederick would be angry. And Oliver, don't think me ungrateful, but—but I must be alone," clasping her aching temples between her white hands.

The lad rose. "I will obey you in both things; but I am going to fight your battles still," and then she was alone.

"Thank Heaven! alone!" she whispered in her wrung heart. She locked the door, and went slowly to the couch again, and, kneeling, hid her face upon it; hour after hour as it passed went laden with her anguish, for her time was not; life seemed to have grown to an eternity, and that eternity was pain. She heard no sound from the outer world; no thought of comfort came to her as she knelt; in her heart was a dumb cry for consolation and love, and both were denied her. Oh! for the touch of baby fingers upon her cheek, the close of baby arms about her throat; the feeble, imperfect words of love in baby tones. Other women, wretched in their husbands, found comfort in their children. She had no child! Lower and lower sank her beautiful head with its heavy coils of hair; there was no sound in the room save that of deep-drawn breaths, that came shuddering from her pale lips. A scarlet and grey parrot looked on in solemn silence, apparently deliberating why its mistress lay there so motionless, so speechless. The golden noon had long since past, and the long, level beams of light across the floor showed the afternoon was far advanced, and still my lady did not stir; then the parrot grew impatient, and hopping to and fro strove to attract her attention, and failing, began to whistle "When other lips."

My lady started up. "Silence," she cried in an awful voice; "silence! Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven! I am going mad!" and throwing her arms high above her head, fell heavily forwards, and for a short time knew neither care nor woe, because her senses were lost in blessed forgetfulness. When she recovered consciousness she heard a knocking at the door. Slowly she rose, and opened it to confront Jenny.

"Oh! my lady!" she cried, "how frightened

we have been! We—we thought you ill or dead—and none of us could come in to you."

"I have been ill, I am not now. I shall not dress this evening, so you will not disturb me. I am going to my room." She moved forward uncertainly, with feet that scarce could do her will.

"My lady has eaten nothing all day!" Jenny said, with respectful anxiety.

"I want nothing;" and in some way crept up the broad staircase and through the long corridor to her own apartments.

Late in the evening she heard her husband's step outside, and opening her door spoke to him, "Frederick."

He paused and turned a pitiless, cruel face upon her, "What is it?"

She went towards him, and suddenly put her arms about his neck, laying her head upon his shoulder.

"Oh my husband! my husband! be kind to me—my heart is broken! Fred—Fred—Fred!"

But he thrust her roughly away. "Keep your affection for Ormby," he said coarsely.

She fell back against the wall, her lovely eyes full of a great horror, her face drawn and ghastly. She tried to speak, and could not.

And he went on ruthlessly, "Does your conscience accuse you at last? I have heard of the disgrace you have this day brought upon me, and I will never forgive you or call you wife again; neither will I exchange any word with you. I shall not trouble you with my presence. I have taken chambers, and am now going to them."

She spoke at last. "What have I done that you should hate me? As Heaven is my witness I have been a true wife."

He turned on his heel with an oath. She did not follow him; she did not raise any outcry; she crept like a dying creature back to her room, moaning in her heart, "Heaven is very cruel."

Early in the following day the Duchess of Etherington called and demanded to see her. She requested the light-footed Jenny to take her to my lady's room; and, entering, was shocked at the change she saw in her. Her face looked pinched and worn, dark circles were about the sunken eyes, and her beauty seemed almost to have left her.

"My child!" the Duchess said, "I have come to comfort you," and clasped Jean to her heart; and the touch of her kind hands, the close kiss, broke down my lady's self-control. She clung about her friend, and they wept together.

When they had grown calmer, the elder woman said, "You must drive with me to-day in the Row."

Jean started, "Oh, no! no! I cannot endure another trial like that of yesterday." But the other insisted.

"My dear, if you hide yourself away, society will say you are afraid; if you appear with me daily the storm will soon blow over; those who cut you will be most eager for a renewal of friendship. My name and my character, 'proudly,' are known; to be my friend is to win social safety."

So my lady allowed herself to be persuaded, and drove in the Row with the gayest of the gay. Society was surprised and not a little scandalised by "her Grace's" conduct, but dared not openly comment upon it. On all sides men and women bowed to her and smiled; but no one gave Jean any sign of recognition save a pretty, dark-eyed girl, who was smartly reprimanded by her mother for her imprudence.

Jean thought the drive would never end; but she preserved a quiet demeanour, and even answered her friend rationally. At last the order was given "home," and in a little while she was deposited safely at her door. She asked if Greatorex had returned in her absence, and was answered in the negative, and her heart sank yet lower.

In the evening she dined alone. Oliver "dropped in," as he called it, to see her, and tell her he was going to the club, and, if

possible, he would bring "Fred home like a naughty schoolboy."

Then she was alone again, and began to wonder how she had sinned socially, and why no one would tell her the reason of the "cut direct" she had received. Slowly it dawned on her that probably her husband's jealousy might be known, that perhaps she was believed guilty, and so she had been punished.

She started up, a red spot on either cheek, her eyes flashing. "How dare they? Oh! how dare they? I will not endure it; I will fight it out! I have lost happiness and love; I will not lose my good name."

She shivered as if with cold, though, indeed, her face and hands burned feverishly.

"Oh," she said again, thinking now of the Duchess, "to-morrow I will compel her to tell me all! It is not wise or kind to hide it from me!"

It was very late, but Frederick did not return. She waited hour after hour, hoping he would come, and all unconscious of the part he was even then playing, not knowing that her wrongs were being avenged in part in the presence of a crowd of men.

Oliver, on leaving her, had gone straight to the club, where he found Frederick playing *carte*. He looked up and nodded to the lad, who returned his salute with a stony stare, and passed on.

A man asked, "Are you not on good terms with Greatorex?" and the boyish answer was, "I should think not; nor with any other blackguard."

When Frederick had finished his game, he walked over to Oliver.

"What is the matter, old boy?" he asked, with an assumption of carelessness.

The youth bent his fine, frank eyes full upon him.

"You know very well; but I am willing to shake hands and be friends if you will return to Lady Greatorex."

His cousin muttered an oath under cover of his moustache.

"So you are on her side?" savagely.

"Yes; as every true man must be who knows the facts of her case. I have seen the Duchess, and she has considerably enlightened me as to the state of affairs."

"Look here, Oliver," Greatorex said, loudly and fiercely, "the Duchess is my enemy, and my wife's friend; she is willing to blacken me to my acquaintances, and make me appear the sinner. If you come from Lady Greatorex, you may return and say, for the disgrace she has made me suffer, she shall suffer double; say too, to Ormsby, he shall not go free. I will brand him with shame."

There was a sudden hush in the room, and, turning, the cousin saw Maurice standing in the doorway, with a white and wrathful face. Neither ever forgot his look as he swung with his long stride into the centre of the room, and held up one hand as if demanding attention.

"Gentlemen," he said, and young Oliver placed himself beside him, "I demand a hearing. Yesterday Lady Greatorex was treated with shameful discourtesy, and her husband was not near to defend her or protest against it. Shall I say why? There is a horrible conspiracy on foot to deprive her ladyship of position and honour. Some man is needed to bear the brunt of the evil. I am that man—I, who, until lately, was the friend of her husband."

Greatorex attempted to speak, but a score of voices cried him down, and Maurice went on,—

"My lord is weary of his wife, and would be rid of her. He leaves her to her own resources, unless, indeed, she will accept the escort of his friend. My lady is unsuspecting; she appears everywhere with this man; and when the plot against her peace is ripe for execution, reports not only scandalous, but devilish, are set afloat concerning her. Her name is coupled with that of her husband's friend; and I say the man who set the lie agog was, and is, my lord, and that his ally is

a woman whose name for the present shall not be divulged."

"You lie!" Greatorex broke in madly, afraid lest detection should ensue.

Oh! that Valentine were at hand to help him with her ready wit.

"Prove that I lie!" Maurice retorted, in a white rage.

Greatorex sprang upon him and clutched at his throat; but Maurice was the stronger, and he flung him off; then, before anyone could interfere, blows had been exchanged, and Greatorex had an ugly wound on the cheek, whilst his mouth was bleeding freely. Then men rushed in and stayed the fight, and some led "my lord" away, he cursing and struggling, and swearing to have his revenge.

Maurice quietly wiped the blood from his hands that had flown from his antagonist's face—he, himself, had received no wound; then he flashed on the assembled men.

"Let no man dare to couple my name with that of Lady Greatorex, either in my hearing or to my knowledge; and let no one dare to speak lightly of her in my presence."

Then he moved to the door; but many a hand was extended to him, for, despite his taciturnity, he was well liked; he had done so many "good turns" to fellows in his set in that quiet, unobtrusive way of his, and there was scarcely a man who could really and honestly believe the accusation brought against him. Maurice replied to all their kindly speeches, then broke away from them, and, reaching the door, found Oliver beside him.

"Let me go with you," the lad entreated, and the other made no remonstrance; so they stepped out into the lovely starlit night together.

(To be concluded in our next.)

BY THE SAD SEA WAVES.

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CHAPTER XIX.

The blinds are all down in Lonesome Lodge, mute sign of the presence of the dread visitor, Death. Calm, white, and pure lies Mona, her hands folded on her breast, and a look of utterable sadness on her white, still face. She had slept well indeed—the sleep that knows no awakening. Beside her sits Nellie Chaloner, dissolved in tears, looking sorrowfully at the sad, dead face.

"She can't take scarlet fever from me now. Poor Mona!" thinks Nellie, with a fresh burst of tears. "Poor Rex! what shall we say to him. This will break his heart. Wife and baby both gone! How still she looks, how beautiful, but what an unhappy look about the closed lips!"

In the white wasted fingers Nellie has placed a few snowdrops, and her long, soft, beautiful hair lies like a silken brown mass on the pillow.

Downstairs Margaret sits, white and speechless, with hands tightly locked together, and eyes that stare into vacuity. So she stays all day, and in the evening Nellie comes in softly, her face disfigured from long crying. She looks at Margaret's rigid figure for a moment in silence.

"You must feel this greatly?" she says. "No answer.

Nellie looks at her curiously, then she speaks again.

"Why did you not send for another doctor when Mona got worse?"

Margaret looks up, fixes her eyes for a second on Mrs. Chaloner, and then looks quickly away.

"She died in the night; she was dead this morning," and her voice is hard and cold.

"She should never have been left," Nellie says, sternly. "Poor child to die all alone. How will you face her husband, and tell him you let her die alone?"

Margaret relapses into a strange sullen silence, and sits looking perfectly unmoved, and only when Dr. Smith comes in does any emotion show in her manner. She glances up at him quickly and then looks at Nellie, but says nothing.

Dr. Edward Smith is very grave, and he looks white and troubled. Without speaking to Margaret he comes over to where Nellie is sitting at the writing-table writing a very tear-blotted letter to her husband.

"Mrs. Challoner," he whispers, "does it strike you that Margaret is very odd?"

"I have not thought about her. I am too grieved to think of anyone but that poor child upstairs. If I had only been with her!" answers Nellie, tearfully; but she follows Dr. Smith's glance, and looks at Margaret, across whose stony face a strange malignant smile has come.

Nellie shudders, and looks up at Dr. Smith startled. He answers her look with a grave glance, full of meaning, and says very low,—"Come into the next room a moment," and Nellie follows him silently.

He is greatly agitated, and walks up and down awhile without speaking.

"Are you sure," he says at last, "that Mrs. Challoner died a natural death?"

"What do you mean?" gasps Nellie, turning absolutely grey with fright.

"I am afraid to think what I mean!" he says, huskily. "But I know Margaret is mad—her senses are gone. And what may not she have done to that poor young creature!"

"You don't think she murdered her?" gasps Nellie, in a voice of horror.

"I do not know." He is trembling with emotion, and the hand he lays on Nellie's is cold as death. "May I see her?"

"Yes," Nellie says, with a burst of crying. "I am thinking of her poor husband! This will kill him!"

"You telegraphed for him?"

"Yes; this morning. Oh, how awful it all is!"

Dr. Smith passes his hand across his damp brow.

"Take me to her," he whispers. "Hark! What is that?"

A carriage dashes furiously up to the door, and a bell rings violently.

In the hall it is getting dusk; but as Nellie and Dr. Smith appear they come face to face with Rex Challoner.

"Rex!" cries Nellie, in a choked voice. "You have come!"

For a moment she forgets time, distance, everything, and fancies that he has heard the news, and has come.

"My wife!" he says, with a blank, haggard stare. "I have travelled night and day! Where is Mona?"

Into the group has stolen Margaret, with a face of ashes and quivering lips.

"She died in her sleep," she whispers.

"And her baby died, and—"

"Dead! Oh, heavens! am I too late?" cries Rex, with a great and exceeding bitter cry. And, without answering Nellie's sobbing entreaties to wait one moment, he pushes through them all, and goes stumbling up the staircase, seeing nothing, knowing nothing, but that his darling is dead!

And none venture to follow him. They remain in an awful silence, thinking of the meeting between the husband and the wife.

In speechless, tearless anguish, Rex kneels by the bed, and gazes with dry eyes at the face of his wife—the sweet face he loves so passionately; and its look of pain strikes him to the heart—the sad expression on the marble features.

His face works convulsively, and a great burst of sobs come at last.

And how strange it seems that she, who would ever have smoothed the lightest shadow from his brow, is now unmoved at the sound of his bitter weeping; her little hand lies in his, cold and still. And through his grief remorse forces itself.

"Why did I leave her?" he cries. "Why

did I not come to her? My wife! my darling!"

Have hours passed or minutes only, when he raises his head to rend his heart afresh with a look at her face?

The room is very dark, only one candle burns upon a table; and how cold it is—how bitterly cold, with the chill wind creeping in through the open window!

With a gasping sob, he reaches forward and lays his face against hers, and kisses the sad mouth with a great tenderness; and as his lips touch hers, a thrill runs through his veins, his heart gives one mighty leap and stands still.

Ab, no; it is only a trick his imagination has played him! No sigh could have come from those dead lips—and yet—

With a face convulsed with grief and a strange, wild fear, he stares like one bereft at the face of his wife.

Great heavens! do the lights and shadows play false? Is this grief turning his brain? He could have sworn that a quiver has passed—light as the trembling of an eyelash—over her closed lips!

Trembling so, that he can hardly stand, he moves to where the candle is, and, to assure himself that she is really dead, lets the light fall full upon her face.

His own is whiter than hers as he gazes with dilated eyes.

She is dead! and yet—Ah! what is this?

Again that strange quiver; and a look of horror comes into his eyes. What strange, awful change is this?

Slowly, slowly, the soft, beautiful hair brushed back from Mona's forehead is turning "white!" and on her forehead little beads of moisture stand out; and then, even as he gazes, a sigh like a sob breaks from her lips.

And now he is holding her to his breast—to his wildly beating heart—mad, delirious with joy!

"My darling! I am here; your own Rex! You are safe with me!"

In the shadows where the others sit in troubled silence, broken only by Nellie's sobs, no thought of the strange, awful transformation comes. They know nothing till heavy, hasty steps come to the door, and on the threshold stand Rex, with a white figure clasped in his arms.

A wild shriek comes from Margaret; a wild peal of laughter that freezes the blood of all who hear.

Then Rex's voice is heard.

"Help me, quick! She has only fainted. See, she lives!"

"Poor, poor Rex!" thinks Nellie. "This is awful."

But Dr. Smith with one quick look at the face on Challoner's arm, springs forward, and taking the limp form out of the husband's trembling grasp, carries her to a sofa, and lays her there. And hardly able to speak with excitement and hope, Rex watches in an agony while Dr. Smith, with professional presence of mind, tries heart and pulse.

"She lives!" he says, calmly. "Now, no excitement, please," as Rex with a sob of "oh, my wife!" kneels down beside her.

"Her life depends on her calmness," Dr. Smith, struggling desperately to be calm himself. And Nellie feels that she has never admired Dr. Smith enough before. How cool he is, how prompt. How quick to know and do the right thing.

And during this few moments, fraught with so much anxiety, Margaret has stood after one wild shriek, in silence. Now she steals forward and glares at Dr. Smith.

"She is dead; she must be dead!"

Quick and stern he looks at her.

"Miserable girl, this is your work." And suddenly he lays strong fingers on her wrist, and draws her outside the door.

"What did you give her? Quick, speak!" he says, fixing her shifty gaze.

"Tell me, Margaret!"

"The drops!" she answers, with wonderful calmness. "That little bottle you know, I have kept it ever since, and now—Edward," she cries, as with a heavy groan, he goes rapidly back to where Mona lies, to all outward appearance, dead! The drooping snowdrops still in her clasp, the white grave clothes clothing her form.

Dr. Smith turns to Nellie.

"Get a bedroom ready at once, and hot water, and hot blankets."

Then he looks at poor Rex's drawn, anxious face.

"She will live! I know what to do now." And no one knows his thoughts, his agony of remorse, as all night long he works, striving with every means science has invented to kindle the wavering, flickering flame of life.

And at last Mona's lashes are uplifted, and a weak, weak voice whispers,—

"Rex!"

"She will live now," Dr. Smith says, pouring a little brandy-and-water between the pale lips. "But keep her quiet; let the brain have perfect rest."

And it is as if the rest had come, when she falls asleep, her hand in her husband's, his face on the pillow beside hers, listening to the soft, gentle breathing he had thought never to hear again.

A little crowd are gathered on the shore. Something is lying there covered with a sail—something that the waves washed in this morning. A drowned woman, and Dr. Smith, answering a hasty summons, arrives upon the scene.

The crowd fall back; he raises a corner of the covering, and starts as his gaze rests on the drowned face of the girl who had risked and lost so much for his sake.

In silence, with closed lips, he looks at her a while.

"Poor Margaret!" he thinks. "It is better so!"

He is not altogether heartless, and yet it is a relief to him to see Margaret Carlton with her dead face upturned to the sky. He knows that she has died by her own hand, and that she will never disturb his peace any more.

CONCLUSION.

ANOTHER week goes by, and Mona is getting stronger every day. They have not told her about Margaret's death. It had been very terrible, but they are merciful towards her now.

"She could not be blamed altogether," Rex says, gravely; "she was not a responsible being, and her sad tragic end lead his mind to pity rather than condemnation.

For the last few days it seems as if Nellie Challoner was brimming over with some important secret. She looks at Rex, and nods and smiles and spends half her time upstairs in the old unused wing of Lonesome Lodge.

But to-night, when there is quite a little festivity in honour of Mona being lifted on the sofa, where she lies like a snowdrop, in a soft white tea gown, with swansdown ruffles and lace, Nellie beckons to Rex, and with one rapturous look at his wife, he follows, and she leads him down through long passages where he had never been before.

At a closed door Nellie stops.

"Rex, can you bear a great surprise?" she is verging between tears and laughter. "I did not tell you before, Rex, for you are such a dear blundering fellow you would have rushed straight to Mona, and she is too weak to bear much."

"But what is it?"

"Come and see!"

What Rex sees as she opens the door is a bright fire, and a young woman with a baby in her arms!

Bewildered he turns to Nellie, a look of blankness on his face.

SOCIETY.

The Queen's Garden Party on the twenty-ninth of June in Buckingham Palace was an immense success. The weather was lovely, and the six thousand guests, who were *crème de la crème*, thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

The soirée of the Royal Academy on the last day of June was a grand affair, the most distinguished men in literature, science and art being present, as well as several of the clergy, including the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and a fair sprinkling of judges. The Indian princes were magnificent in their handsome Oriental dresses, richly studded with jewels, from which Mr. Val Prinsep was making notes for a future picture; while the fashionable world was represented by Lady Tweeddale, Lord and Lady Middleton, Lord and Lady Denbigh, Mrs. Jeune, Lady Ardingly, magnificent in diamonds, Lord de Vesci, Mrs. Cavendish Bentinck and Mrs. Arthur James. The assembly did not break up till one o'clock, and may certainly be reckoned amongst the most pleasant which the Academy has given.

We are pleased to be able to narrate, says *Modern Society*, to vouch for the accuracy of the following anecdote of a kind act of the Queen's to a sick servant. One of her Majesty's chaplains, who was on duty at Windsor Castle, was asked by her to see one of her servants, who was ill with fever. The chaplain went to a remote tower, where he found the sufferer. On the following morning, before he left the Castle, he thought he would go and ascertain how the sick one was. On entering the room, he found her still in a state of high fever. She had a handkerchief, which had been dipped in eau de Cologne, laid on her forehead. The chaplain, referring to it, said, "That is an excellent remedy." She replied, "Yes; Her Majesty has just been to see me, and has applied it herself."

The Princess of Wales will go to Copenhagen about the beginning of September, accompanied by her daughters. Should the Prince visit Homburg for a few weeks during August, as it is his present intention to do, he will afterwards join his wife in the Danish capital. There is a rumour afloat across the Channel that the Prince of Wales thinks of visiting Boulogne shortly.

The result of the Princess Christian's recent literary labours is now before the public, and a dip into the "Memoirs of the Margravine of Bayreuth" will, no doubt, not only amuse, but startle, the reader. The memoirs are of a Royal woman who suffered throughout her life from ill-health, afflictions of various kinds, and even personal ill-usage. But she always kept a brave heart, and evidently preserved a pungent pen, as some of the things she has to tell of the great and high personages of her time prove.

LADY ROSEBERRY's ball at Lansdowne House, was far and away the most brilliant affair of its kind ever seen in London. Her ladyship's invitations "to have the honour of meeting the Sovereigns and Princes assembled to celebrate Her Majesty's Jubilee" were responded to by all that is best and brightest in Society. There was a big crowd of Kings, Princes, and Princesses present, among whom the Grand Duke Serge of Russia, daughter of Princess Alice, bore away the palm of beauty. Lady de Grey (Gladys) looked splendid in a yellow gown; and the charming Lady Dudley wore black and diamond stars.

The Bishop of London and Mrs. Temple also gave a fashionably-attended Garden Party at Fulham Palace during Jubilee week. The weather was perfect and the old palace and gardens looked their best in the bright June sunlight. Tea was served in the tea-room, and outside on the lawns—cakes of all descriptions, strawberries and cream, ices and iced lemonade, were dispensed at long narrow tables. Both the Bishop and Mrs. Temple being teetotalers, nothing stronger than lemonade is ever offered in the shape of drinkables.

STATISTICS.

The Indian Military budget of Great Britain is £14,000,000. The Indian army consists of 73,000 Europeans and 145,000 natives.

EUROPE AND ITS COLONIES.—How ought you to decide the population of different countries—by the number of inhabitants in the several mother countries, or by that of their subjects all the world over? On the latter basis, a French writer has recently compiled some interesting statistics. Thus Portugal in Europe has only 4,000,000 inhabitants, but the total number of persons living under the Portuguese flag is nearly twice as many (7,896,628). Of 24,000,000 Spanish subjects, only 16,000,000 live in Europe. The population of the Netherlands is only 4,000,000, but the total number of Dutch subjects is 31,000,000. On this same basis Germany is far less populous than France. It is France, says the writer we are quoting, wheresoever the French flag flies. The number of Frenchmen thus interpreted is 70,798,083 (of whom 58,218,903 live in France in Europe), but that of the Germans is only a little more than 47,000,000. The total number of British subjects, we may add, is put at 306,371,514.

GEMS.

A good name, like good will, is got by many actions and lost by one.

The smallest children are nearest Heaven, as the smallest planets are nearest the sun.

PALE death beats with impartial foot at the hovels of the poor and turrets of kings.

DIVINE love is a secret flower, which in its early buds is happiness and in its full bloom is heaven.

BE pleasant and kind to those around you. The man who stirs his cup with an icicle spoils the tea and chills his own fingers.

If a man has a right to be proud of anything it is a good action done as it ought to be without any base interest lurking at the bottom of it.

No relation can be more charged with responsibility than that between a parent and the immortal being to whom he has been the means of giving life.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PLAIN CAKE.—1lb. flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. each of sugar, fruit, and butter, the rind and juice of a fresh lemon, and a little nutmeg; one teaspoonful of baking powder, as much soda as will lie on the end of a knife, buttermilk to mix.

BUTTERMILK AND POTATOES.—We doubt if all people will like this mixture, but it is popular in some places, and certainly wholesome. Boil floury potatoes, and, while hot, mash them well. Add pepper and salt to taste, and buttermilk to make a rather thick purée. Serve hot.

STEEL ORNAMENTS AND PAMPAS GRASS (TO CLEAN).—Rub the ornaments with the finest glass paper, then with a mixture of powdered and sifted putty and olive oil. We have also found the German Putz pomade very effectual. Fine steel ornaments should be kept in powdered magnesia or arrowroot. For the grass, make a good lather in some warm water, in which a small lump of soda has been dissolved, and dip the heads in this, and shake them about gently in it till the dirt is well out of them; then dry them a little with an old, soft cloth or handkerchief, and lay them before the fire (or the sun, if hot enough, is best) to get quite dry, shaking them gently at intervals. If carefully done, they will come quite white and feathery; but, if they are roughly handled, they will shake to pieces.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is the misfortune of young people, before they become fully engaged in the relations of life and business, that they look too much to acquaintances for encouragement, and make the amusement which acquaintances can furnish too indispensable. The tender mind of youth is reluctant or unable to stand alone; it needs to be one of a class. Hence the hours that ought to be spent in the acquisition of that general knowledge which is so useful in after-life, and which can be acquired only in youth, are thrown away in the most inglorious pursuits; for acquaintances are seldom the companions of study or the auxiliaries of business.

MILLING INDUSTRY IN INDIA.—A new and promising step has been taken in India in the direction of developing home industries to supply home needs. Hitherto the product of the teeming wheat field has been shipped to Europe, and from Europe has been brought in return the same wheat ground into flour for Indian consumption. This was a capital arrangement for shipowners and European millers. But it has dawned upon the native mind that the work of grinding may as well be done at home, and the profits of European merchants and millers saved for the Indian people. Accordingly a great native milling corporation has been formed at Bombay, and there are indications that it will be imitated in other Indian cities. This will probably mean higher prices to the wheat-grower and lower prices to the bread-consumer, and general advantage to the Indian people. Indeed, it is not impossible that the milling of wheat for the European market will yet be done within sight of the Indian wheat fields. The idea is suggested that here is an excellent opportunity for British manufacturers of all kinds of milling machinery to introduce their goods into a region that is rapidly coming to the front as a wheat-producing country.

DRESSES FOR CHILDREN.—To keep children's dresses in good order and suitable variety involves never-ending labour. In renovating costumes, wonderful effects can be produced by the judicious use of a yard of velveteen, plush, or velvet, cut up to form a new collar, cuffs, and band to trim the remodelled dress. If the bodice is completely worn out, the skirt may be used to make a new bodice, and a fresh skirt can be substituted made of velveteen, or of some striped fabric matching the plain material of the dress. Ribbed velveteen is much used for inexpensive costumes, and looks very pretty when combined with a shade to match in woollen material. The skirt should be made of the velveteen, which also trims the bodice. Frocks with full skirts and long-waisted bodices are again becoming fashionable for little girls of seven or eight years. A good model can be made of cashmere, or later of wash goods; the full skirt is mounted with gathers, a second row of gathers about three inches below the first, keeping the skirt flat over the hips; a short puff is added to the back. The sleeves are gathered and finished off with deep cuffs. The turned-down collar matches the cuffs. Beautiful dresses can be made from the great varieties of cotton goods with which the shops abound. Etamine is shown in great variety; some with cream colour grounds, figured with cardinal or blue, are extremely pretty, and inexpensive. Those made up with ribbon bows matching the design in colour are pretty, and if made at home the cost is a mere nothing. White is always pretty, whether of woollen goods or the soft creamy shades or of the various cotton materials so lavishly displayed. Ginghams are shown in endless variety. These always wash well, if bought in a good quality, and are extremely pretty, the soft shades combining so exquisitely in the stripes, plaids and changeable varieties shown. Coloured embroideries can be used for trimming these, or plain white as a contrast, if preferred.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

N. C. R.—We do not give business addresses.

P. H. D. T.—The book of poems named is out of print.

JANET W. W. M.—She must sign her own Christian name.

T. L.—Gum-arabic slowly dissolved in the mouth will help you.

T. P. A.—Sage tea strengthens and revives the growth of the hair.

DORA C.—All such things are more or less injurious. Let them alone.

L. H.—Boiling officinal alcohol dissolves strychnine without difficulty.

T. W.—Mirage pronounced me-rash, the "g" having a very soft sound.

S. C.—Beautiful penmanship. You are too young to have any decided force of character.

ANXIOUS.—The longest verse in the Bible is the ninth verse of the eighth chapter of Esther.

D. L.—1. The address is not known to us. 2. You must work hard to improve yourself.

A. L. B.—President Cleveland, of the United States, was married to Miss Folsom on June 2, 1886.

A. F.—A knife should never be used in conveying food to one's mouth; it is a sure sign of poor breeding.

LOUIE F.—We have been unable to decipher the hieroglyphics sent, and would therefore suggest that their author be asked to furnish a translation.

E. A. G.—Both are difficult to learn without a teacher; but you are not too old to become proficient in them if you take instructions at once.

T. T.—Tamarinds are the fruit of a large tree growing wild in various parts of Africa and Asia, and now cultivated in South America and the West Indies.

DENNIS.—There is no means by which a sunken neck or chin may be developed, unless it be to take plenty of open-air exercise, and eat heartily of healthy food.

E. A. A.—All commentators agree, we believe, that the lion from which St. Paul speaks of being delivered, after his first imprisonment at Rome, was the Emperor Nero.

A. C. A.—To make a substitute for glass for a hot-house, apply, with a common painter's brush, boiled oil, or Canadian balsam, diluted with oil of turpentine, to the surface of white muslin previously stretched out and fastened in the position it is intended to occupy.

E. D. Y.—Nickel-plating requires practical experience, and therefore an amateur would have little if any success were he to attempt the work from any description given here. It would be far better to take the article to be plated to one who thoroughly understands such work.

S. C. R.—The names of several kings of the Shepherd dynasties have been preserved. These are Solatis, Boen, Apachmas, Jonias, and Assa. Under the last of these Joseph was made ruler. But other Shepherd kings ruled many years subsequently. They were overthrown by the rulers of the period of Moses.

M. A. C.—The parents of the bride furnish the notes or cards of invitation, and attend to their distribution. The groom usually furnishes them with a list of those whom he desires to be present. In some ultra-fashionable cases he furnishes his individual card, which is enclosed with that of the bride and the invitation-card or note.

F. W.—Sassafras-bark tea is highly recommended as a blood purifier. Sixpennyworth of Rochelle salts, dissolved in a quart of boiling water and allowed to cool, also answers the same purpose when taken in wine-glassful doses every morning before breakfast for four days. Then its use should be discontinued for one or two days, and resumed again until the amount named is exhausted.

L. B.—Lumbago, a rheumatic affection of the muscles in the small of the back, may arise from partial exposure to cold, especially when the body is heated; and violent straining may sometimes induce it. In persons with a very strong constitutional tendency to rheumatism the slightest exciting cause will bring on an attack of this painful affection. The treatment, of course, varies with the intensity of the attack; but in the majority of cases a warm bath at bed-time, followed by ten grains of Dover's powder (procured at any chemist's) will speedily remove it. Soap liniment is often used as a local remedy.

E. B. A.—Flotsam and jetsam are old words used to designate different kinds of wrecked goods. Lawyers are supposed to have adopted them from seamen. Goods flotsam were goods which floated away when a ship was wrecked. Goods jetsam were those cast over from a ship in peril. These words are but seldom used; but the word jettison, formed probably from jetsam, is often employed in insurance law and practice. It means properly the act of casting goods overboard; thus goods are said to be jettisoned, and a loss is said to be by jettison. Sometimes, though rarely and it is thought inaccurately, the goods cast over are called the jetsam; as "the jettison consisted of such and such goods."

MISTLUCE.—Bathing frequently and walking are both calculated to improve one's general health.

M. M.—You will find it a rather difficult matter to get a position as copyist until a most decided improvement is made in your present style of penmanship.

J. N. W.—The poem for which you are seeking may be found in any book of standard poetical selections, procurable at a book-seller's or from a newsdealer.

O. W. D.—To blue a gun-barrel, apply nitric acid and let it eat into the iron a little; then the latter will be covered with a thin film of oxide. Clean the barrel, oil, and burnish it.

S. M. S.—"Lacon; or, Many Things in Few Words," was written by Charles Caleb Colton. He graduated at Cambridge in 1801. He died by his own hand, in France, on April 28, 1832.

V. V. W.—Wedding invitations are generally sent out a week or two previous to the date of the ceremony, thus giving the friends of the couple ample time to make preparation for it.

M. D.—A chronological period of 7,980 years, combining the solar, lunar, and indiction cycles, is known as the Julian period. It was proposed by Scaliger to avoid ambiguities in chronological dates, and was so named because composed of Julian years.

L. G.—The number of slaves in Cuba declared free, in accordance with the abolition law, between May 8, 1855, and May 7, 1886, was 25,523. The number who had obtained their freedom previously is stated to be 120,253; leaving 25,381 still awaiting their emancipation.

W. L. H.—When a gentleman takes a lady friend to a picnic, he should see that her every wish is gratified, but at the same time should not entirely monopolize her attention. On the contrary, he should help to minister to the comforts of the whole party, and thus make the event a most thoroughly enjoyable one.

THE PARTING AT THE BEACH.

'TWAS down on the sandy beach,
As the sun hung low in the west,
That I parted for e'er with a friend most dear,
The friend who had loved me best.

I watched his bark go out,
With her spreading sails so white,
And I marked the dawn of that golden morn,
As it were the darkest night.

I will come again, he said,
With his air of manly pride,
I will come again, o'er the stormy main,
For your sake, my little bride.

But, in spite of the glowing hope
That shone in his parting tear,
My soul looked out of her prison-house
With the eyes of a prophet seer.

It saw a struggling bark,
With a loved form on the deck;
A storm at sea, and at last, at last!
A shattered, sinking wreck!

Long years have passed since then;
My hair is white, as you see;
In the sunset dim I shall go to him,
For he never can come to me.

M. K.

LOTA.—It is very obvious from the queries sent that you have had no experience in writing for the press, and therefore, as we are kept plentifully supplied with material by trained authors, the kind offer is respectfully declined. We would suggest an hour or two's daily practice at penmanship, and in a short time the cramped letters now seen will exhibit more freedom of form.

M. C. C.—To make floating island, take one quart of milk, sweetened, the whites of six eggs, wine to the taste, half a pound of pulverized sugar (for the island), and a little currant jelly. Beat the eggs, and add the half pound of sugar by degrees, and as much currant jelly as will make it a fine pink. Pour the milk into a glass bowl, and with a tablespoon place the island on it in heaps, tastefully arranged.

F. D. D.—From your statement of the case, it is very evident that you have so tormented your lover with ceaseless jealousy that he is no longer at ease in your presence, and, man-like, seeks it as little as possible. And the best, the only, advice worth a rush is that you say resolutely to the green-eyed monster, "Get thee behind me" whenever he assails you, and love and trust your lover till the wedding-day rolls round. If you do not your chances of happiness will be very small, and as you say you cannot give him up, you would far better be dead than continually jealous.

DORA.—Coltsfoot is a perennial herb, with a creeping root, which early in the spring sends up several leafless flower-stems. The leaves do not make their appearance until after the flowers are blown. The plant grows spontaneously in Europe and America. It flowers in April. Coltsfoot is not thought to exercise much influence upon the human system. It is, however, demulcent, and is sometimes used in chronic coughs, consumption, and other affections of the lungs. The leaves were smoked by the ancients in pulmonary complaints. The usual form of administration is that of decoction. An ounce or two of the plant may be boiled in two pints of water to a pint, of which a tea-cupful may be taken several times a day.

R. L.—As the lady has not promised to become your wife she is at perfect liberty to receive attention from other gentleman friends. Make inquiry at a neighbouring bookshop.

C. H.—Many first-class histories of Napoleon Bonaparte are in existence, and are accessible to any general reader in any of the public libraries, both in this city and elsewhere.

CELIA.—Having arrived at that age, he should be provided with separate accommodations. It seems very plain to the ordinary observer that common decency dictate such a course.

DOTTY.—1. It is the lady's prerogative to recognize a gentleman friend in the street, but among intimate acquaintances it is not considered improper for the gentleman to speak first. 2. Very pretty.

COUNTRY GIRL.—1. Moles can only be removed by a surgical operation. 2. Mary means "bitter." Ada "noble." 3. Writing very indifferent. You require constant practice from good models.

DELTA.—If you will kindly specify what square dance is referred to, we will be happy to oblige by giving the calls and figures. This is a most important matter, as both vary considerably in different dances.

C. W. F.—Several recipes for making compounds guaranteed to remove corns are met with, but from personal experience we can truthfully say that none are superior to iodine, applied twice a day with a soft camel's-hair brush.

L. K. N.—Unknown correspondents under fictitious names are things a girl would best leave alone. We have never known good to come of them, and often evil. As to masquerade balls it depends. Some are reputable, others quite the reverse, so be careful what you do. The hair is brown, and very pretty.

AURA.—Pomerania is a province of Prussia, mostly north of latitude 53° north, and stretching along the Baltic from longitude 12° to 18° east. The population is chiefly Protestant. The principal crops are wheat, barley, rye, oats, potatoes, flax, hemp, and tobacco. The chief industries, besides agriculture, are the rearing of cattle and poultry, shipbuilding, manufactures of linen and woolen stuffs, iron and glass wares, &c. Smoked geese are important articles of trade.

LOTTIE H.—To make your skin white and your hair black we know of nothing better than a sun-bonnet and a bottle of hair dye, though our advice is against the use of either. As to what you should learn to do that depends so greatly upon your natural aptitudes we can say nothing further than that telegraphy, wood engraving and carving, artistic dressmaking and photography are among those that best repay talent and diligence, with which, however, they are hopeless.

N. U.—A Highland lass should wear a skirt of tartan plaid, short and full, bright-colored stockings and low high-heeled shoes, bodice of black velvet with tartan ribbons, hair flowing with tartan snood. A princess should have a white satin petticoat trimmed with lace or pearls, corsage of crimson velvet, heart-shaped, with stomacher of lace, high red-heeled shoes with big buckles, powdered hair, necklace of pearls or diamonds, and court train of crimson velvet sown with pearls depending from the shoulders.

DAISY.—Your case, as you state it, is sad. Your husband seems not only morbidly jealous, but inclined to play the domestic tyrant. Refuses to let you go out or take any recreation, is suspicious if you speak kindly to his own brother, and requires you to wash his face and neck, help him dress and clean his shoes in addition to doing your own housekeeping and taking care of his four children. That certainly seems making the matrimonial yoke a little too heavy. Reason with him calmly about his injustice. Don't quarrel or complain to the neighbours, but quietly show your indisposition to be imposed upon beyond your strength or your self-respect. Your hair is black and silky. Yes, we see the silver threads among the jet. You are too young to turn grey at twenty-four. Take an iron tonic. Perhaps your hair is too long to be vigorous. Cut it shorter and wash it in a sea of willow bark. This will strengthen it. Warm water with a little rum and quinine in it will do the same. To cure your little step-daughter of biting her nails make her wear mittens or put rhubarb or aloes on her finger tips.

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